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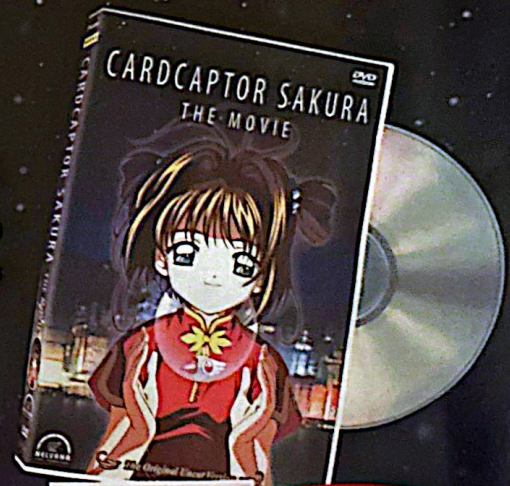
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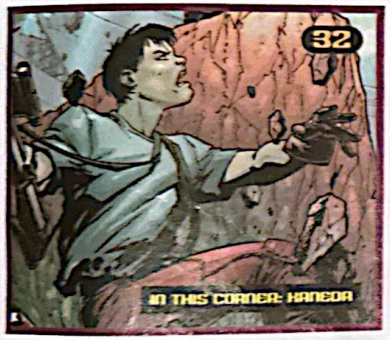
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#2 • SPRING 2002





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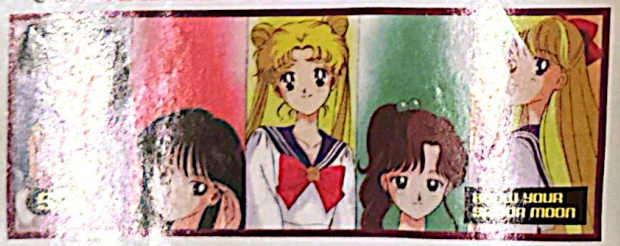
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FROM THE TOP

WITNESS OUR DEDICATED STAFF!



SIN TRADE: Associate Editor Rob Bricken shows off his Urusei Yatsura Lum tattoo.

It's great time to be alive.

As a longtime otaku, I can tell you things are better now than they've ever been. I remember back in the early '90s, when folks were still using the word "Japanimation"* and practically the only anime out were a few Streamline Pictures dubs of *Fist of the North Star* and *Vampire Hunter D* or our worn-out tapes of *Robotech*. Of course, there was always the hope to find a friend of a friend of a friend in Japan who taped *Ranma 1/2* from Fuji TV.

Those times are officially gone. Nowadays, little boys are wearing *Dragon Ball Z* backpacks to school, little girls are playing with *Sailor Moon* dolls and every once in a while, you can see an anime movie in a real movie theater. Video/DVD stores are slowly being taken over by anime, and what merchandise we can't get here, the Internet provides in copious amounts.

And best of all, now we can turn on our TVs and get *Gundam, Cowboy Bebop, Dragon Ball*, etc. Sure, in yesteryear you may have gotten to catch weird localizations of *Gatchaman, Astro Boy, Speed Racer*...but now we can finally watch Japan's greatest hits, past and present. The times are good.

But not quite good enough. There's always room for improvement. *Princess Mononoke* only made $2 million in the U.S. Ouch. *Spirited Away* still hasn't come out over here—that's like a knife in our [illegible] still no Anime Channel. These things have to change, I think to be done. We're doing our part at *Anime* [illegible] yours.

Let [illegible]

Robert L. Bricken
Associate Editor, *Anime Invasion*

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ANIMAIL!

ACTION... REACTION!

ANIME INVASION #1 came, it saw, it burrowed into the hearts of anime fans everywhere like some sort of canine infection. Anime fans are a persnickety bunch; they get furious when they feel their favorite pastime isn't getting the respect it deserves, so the fact that our office is still standing is a good sign.

Anime fans also hate the word "persnickety."

So Anime Invasion marches on! I got a heap of mail filled with kind words, which was reassuring, but there were also plenty of helpful [and some just plain mean!] suggestions on how we can improve the magazine. And that's what I wanna see! We're here to entertain, educate and inform you, so you need to get off your butt and tell us what you think!

But anyway, on to the letters...



HEY A.I. STAFF,

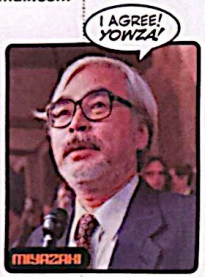
I loved your first issue. Parts of it made me laugh (that pic of *Pokémon*'s James with breasts) and other parts amazed me (all the crap cut out of *DBZ*).



But I have a question: You mentioned something called "fan service" in regard to *Gunsmith Cats*. It's also mentioned on the *Evangelion* tapes. What's that mean?

Also, are you going to be obsessed with monkeys like your parent mags, *Wizard* and *ToyFare*?

Jack Johnson
jtjgundam@hotmail.com



"Fan service" refers to scantily clad characters, gratuitous shower scenes, skirts blowing up, full-on nudity...basically any unnecessary titillation included to make the fans happy. Evangelion was notorious for promising fan service in the previews for upcoming episodes, but instead getting more and more depressing with no fan service in sight.

The original blueprint for Anime Invasion called for maximum monkey madness, but if anyone wants to suggest a substitute obsession, we're all ears.

DEAR MAGAZINE HOTSHOTS,

First suggestion, cool it with the giant robot thing. Sure, everyone loves them (I'm the only one who doesn't, apparently). But it's all I saw in your first issue. "Yay robots" this, and "Go Robots" that. Less robots.

Second, Hayao Miyazaki is the greatest! Let's see more on him, 'cause he's so cool and everything.

Oh, and I didn't see anything about anime music in the winter issue. But oh well...

Jen Pilles
tikijen@hotmail.com

Less robots, check. More Miyazaki, check. More music, check.

***What if Miyazaki does a robot musical? Are we allowed to cover that? I imagine it being like a much louder, clanky-er version of* Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk.**

DEAR A.I.,

Could you guys just maybe have a little more shôjo stuff in the magazine? Don't get me wrong, the mag's last issue was great! It's just that I think it could have had a few less many giant robots and facts about how perverted

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DBZ's Master Roshi really is.

Not that I'm against robots and Roshi (well, yeah...I am against that old pervert)...I just believe that you guys can really reach out to girls more if you do more with *Ah! My Goddess* and *Sailor Moon*, etc. I'm not speaking for all girls, because that would just be discrimination. I know plenty of girls who would rather watch an ultraviolent anime as opposed to a lovey-dovey one. But for the girls (and guys) who are into shōjo, you might wanna consider it!

Caitlin Mannix
thepoprincess12@aol.com

First of all, if anyone's guilty of gender discrimination, it's you! We're not all "guys" here at the Anime Invasion office! We've got boatloads of chicks!

Anyway, it's not our goal to cater to guys or girls—we just wanna cover the properties anime fans dig the most, and believe me, Sailor Moon and Ah! My Goddess are definitely on that list.

DEAR ANIME INVASION,

Does Pioneer plan to release any new *Trigun* anime? Maybe more episodes or a movie? I really enjoyed the series and would like to see more of it.

Ben Hester
kwijibo@hotmail.com

You're out of luck, Ben—at least for the moment. "We've released all [the Trigun anime] that's been done," says Chad Kime, Pioneer Entertainment's marketing manager. "They haven't announced plans for any more." However, Chad says Trigun creator Yasuhiro Nightow has been working on a continuation of the manga, which could possibly lead to more anime down the road. Keep your fingers crossed.

DEAR ANIME INVASION,

I want to do voice-overs for English-dubbed anime. What's the best way to break into the field? How do I get a tryout?

Angel Uschuk
Kansas City, MO

Probably no one knows better than Amanda Winn Lee, the American alter-ego of Rei Ayanami from Neon Genesis Evangelion—and director of the recent Evangelion movie dubs—so that's who I asked.

"The best bet is to get a two-minute demo reel together, doing as many different voices as you possibly can," she says. "Send those off to the different companies and studios you're interested in working

FAN ART

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THE FRONT DOOR

Wanna know what all these anime fans are babbling about? Here's a quick rundown on anime jargon for newbies to keep in mind...

OTAKU—oh-TOCK-oo! An anime fan. In Japan, it's generally a negative term, but here it's the equivalent of "fanboy."

Shojo—SHOW-jo! An adjective meaning "for girls." Shojo manga, shojo anime, etc.

VCD—Video compact disc. DVDs are way better, but VCD has better sound than VHS tapes, with an equivalent picture.

OVA (or **OAV**)—Original Video Animation. A direct-to-video episode (or episodes) that never aired on TV or went to theaters.

Hentai—HEN-tie! It means "pervert," but over here it doubles as "porn."

Kawaii—ka-WHY-ee! It means "cute," but among some anime fans, it often means "This is the only word of Japanese I know."

impossible, so why not a DVD treatment of this great series?

Corey Sadler
cs78@mediaone.net

The entire Ranma series on DVD? "That's the plan," says Renee Solberg, Viz's assistant marketing manager. "So far, everything we hear is positive" about Ranma's success on DVD, she says. Trust me, Corey, the entire Ranma VHS catalog will end up on DVD before much longer. Solberg also said the price will come down on the VHS version of Ranma sometime in early 2002.

Good news—Central Park Media will release episodes 14-26 of Utena in the near future.

Bad news—no plans for any Crying Freeman DVDs. That's life.

(to my knowledge, a record for an anime film, but I could be wrong) with more on the way.

Good luck with the new mag, guys and gals. Keep up the good work.

Corey Henson
Marketing & Public Relations
ADV Films

Thanks, Corey! We're all counting on folks like you to pave the way for more anime on U.S. screens. Don't feel pressured or anything.

As for Spriggan setting a record for number of theaters, I think the Pokémon folks might disagree. Har har. Just kidding. Pokémon was a different beast altogether. A big, yellow, sickeningly cute beast. God, make the pain stop...

Whoops! Allow me to slam the door shut on that little mental breakdown and get the hell out of here. Keep the letters coming, folks!

—Tom Root

It took two tubes of Dippity-Do and one lonely weekend, but Tom Root has finally achieved his dream—Goku hair!

for." Also, do original voices, not imitations of existing characters, unless they're absolutely perfect.

"In order to do anime, you pretty much have to live in the city where the company is," she adds. "And also, as far as supporting yourself doing anime—there's no such thing. Expect to do a lot of commercial and voice-over work." Apart from that, "lots and lots of acting lessons" are mandatory, she says.

DEAR ANIME INVASION,

I'm thrilled to see that Viz Video has started releasing the *Ranma 1/2* episodes on DVD, especially season one's "Digital Dojo." When are they going to release the rest of the seasons?

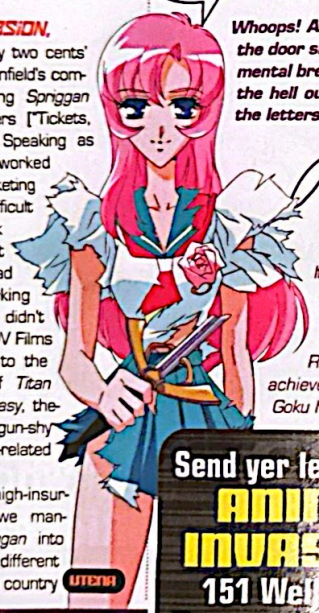
Also I was wondering when, if at all, the rest of the *Revolutionary Girl Utena* series will get released here in the States?

And finally, I was wondering about one of my favorites, which is *Crying Freeman*. Finding it on video is near

YO, ANIME INVASION,

I wanted to add my two cents' worth to Matt Greenfield's comments about getting *Spriggan* booked into theaters ["Tickets, Please," *A.I.* #1]. Speaking as someone who worked directly on the marketing of the film, it is difficult to get an anime flick into theaters. Right off the bat, we had two things working against us: They didn't have a clue who ADV Films was. Plus, thanks to the colossal failures of *Titan A.E.* and *Final Fantasy*, theaters are a bit gun-shy about running sci-fi-related animated films.

But despite nigh-insurmountable odds, we managed to get *Spriggan* into more than a dozen different theaters all over the country



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INVASION NEWS+NOTES

SOUNDS LIKE ANIME

Your guide to necessary *Otaku* music

You've seen the animation—but have you heard it? Once impossible to find or too expensive to import, the orchestral swells and thumping backbeat soundtracks behind anime shows, movies and video games are becoming an art unto themselves. And the best part is, in 2002, you won't have to pay through the nose to hear the music *Akira* banged a drum to.

By eliminating the middle man and creating their own soundtracks just for U.S. release, companies are ready to catapult anime music into American pop culture. Animetrax, (www.animetrax.com), formed by Right Stuf and ADV Films, has made its mark by re-releasing out-of-print anime soundtracks, such as *Sin: The Movie* and *Macross Plus*, at regular CD prices.

"It's clear there was a demand," says Right Stuf's President Shawn Kleckner. The results have been very good so far, he says, pointing to the success of hits like the once impossible-to-find *Akira* soundtrack, which costs less than $15 at Animetrax.

TokyoPop (www.tokyopop.com) has made their mark by creating their own soundtrack albums, rather than importing albums. Working with Squaresoft, they've released a number of *Final Fantasy* "best of" soundtracks in the U.S., compiled exclusively for America. They've also put out CDs for fan-favorite series *Trigun* and *Vampire Princess Miyu*.

After America, Japan has the second largest music market in the world. Both anime soundtracks and J-Pop (a.k.a. Japanese pop music) have long dominated Japan, and are beginning to make a foothold in America.

Of course, with all the anime tunes out there, it'll be years before U.S. companies catch up. If you want an album that hasn't been released domestically, you can check out your local comic store, or hit the web. One of the best import selections on the web is offered by CD Japan (www.cdjapan.co.jp). For more standard fare, try Anime Nation (www.animenation.com) and Planet Anime (www.planetanime.com). But perhaps the best underground site for hard-to-find and out-of-print anime tunes is Animejungle.com, which hocks used product culled from their store in Osaka, Japan. ■ Christian Nutt

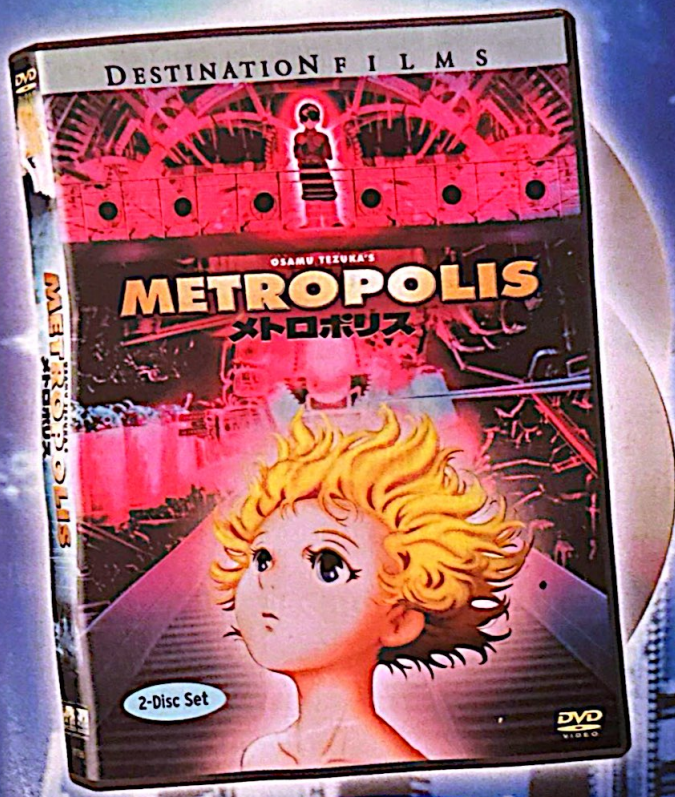


AI'S TOP 10 SOUNDTRACKS

1. *Akira: Original Soundtrack*, Animetrax
2. *Cowboy Bebop: Original Soundtrack*, Victor
3. *The Vision of Escaflowne*, Victor
4. *Neon Genesis Evangelion: S2 Works*, Star Child
5. *Revolutionary Girl Utena: Adolescence Rusk*, Star C
6. *Macross Plus*, Animetrax
7. *Final Fantasy: S Generation*, TokyoPop
8. *Final Fantasy: N Generation*, TokyoPop
9. *Milk Can: Make it Sweet!*, Sony
10. *Chrono Cross*, Digicube



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-James Cameron

"Features some of the most incredible art innovations ever seen in anime!"
-Keith Olexa, STARLOG

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- Animax special: The Making of *Osamu Tezuka's Metropolis*
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BATTEL DAMAGED

Kaiju Big Battel Weds Giant Monsters and Pro Wrestlin'

Giant green lizards. A couple of cyborgs. A mad scientist. A giant can of chicken soup wielding a cleaver.

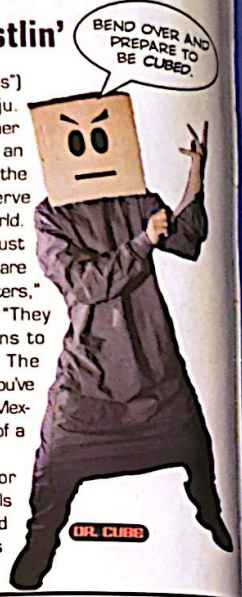
This is the world of Kaiju Big Battel (misspelling intentional), a celebration of weird Japanese pop culture—specifically kaiju (those big monsters like in *Godzilla* and *Ultraman*), bad Japanese-to-English translations and wrasslin'.

"It's a world of good versus evil, where the score is often settled in the wrestling ring," says David Borders, who runs KBB with his brother Rand.



After creating giant monsters suits for an ill-fated short film in 1995, Borders created Kaiju Big Battel as a performance art piece. Now it's a hot draw in its native Boston, consistently selling out 1,000-seat arenas over the past two years.

There are four main teams: The Dr. Cube Posse, led by evil scientist Dr. Cube; Team Space Bug, led by Uchu Chu; the Heroes, mostly led by the Silver Potato; and then the Rouges (pronounced "Rogues") of independent kaiju. The kaiju commisioner sets up the fights in an attempt to protect the innocent and preserve cities around the world.



Don't think it's just guys in suits. "These are bonafide, real monsters," stresses Borders. "They always have reasons to fight each other." The action is real, too. If you've never seen a gigantic Mexican stringbean jump off the top of a steel cage, then you haven't lived.

Check out www.kaiju.com for more info, merchandise and details about their appearance at Wizard World East in Philadelphia this May. ■ Robert Bricken

DEATH OF THE MONTH

FRIEZA FROM DRAGONBALL Z



It was the most satisfying moment in television history. After getting defeated by Goku in a battle lasting some two dozen episodes, the villainous Frieza returns in cyborg form to Earth, with his even more powerful father King Cold to exact revenge. Goku is nowhere to be found, but the mysterious youth Trunks appears out of nowhere to stop Frieza. After casually catching an energy blast that could have destroyed the planet 10 times over, Trunks leaps into the air and slices Frieza in half with his sword. You'd think he'd be done, right? No-sir-ee. While still in the air, Trunks cuts the two halves of Frieza into dozens of tiny pieces with amazing swordwork, and then obliterates the pieces with an energy blast. All this happens in about [illegible] minutes. If only Goku had done that efficiently. ■

RISING FUN

What's hot in Japan

HOT ON TV: From the producers of *Blue Submarine No. 6* comes *Vandread: The Second Stage*, an inevitable 13-episode sequel to last year's unexpected hit series Vandread with more fate-of-the-universe CGI mecha action and alien space babes than you can shake a stick at!



HOT IN TOYS: Renewed interest in *Robotech* in the US has led to renewed interest in *Macross* in Japan. Yamato Toys which previously released Macross Plus figures, has finally released a line a fully transformable Veritech based on the classic movie, *Macross: Do You Remember Love?*

HOT IN VIDEO GAMES: *Seaman*, that pretty but dubiously titled game for the soon-to-be-retired Sega Dreamcast gets a second chance at life with a new edition for the PlayStation 2. Highly recommended for those who enjoy raising curly, virtual fish with human faces.

HOT IN THE MOVIES: *Sakura Wars: The Movie*. The property, which is famous for mixing images of traditional Japan and Japan's far future, is in the midst of a big comeback. ■ Kumar Sivasubramanian

KUROGANE COMMUNICATION

A STORY ABOUT THE END OF OUR WORLD, AND THE ONE WHO SURVIVED.

In the ruins of Japan, Haruka lives with no recollection of what happened to her or her parents. Found by five robots, she finds a new life with them as the last human on Earth. Her only friends are the naive android Spike, the intelligence robot Cleric and the mysterious warrior Angela. They are joined by Trigger, a tiny combat robot, and Reeves, the meanest looking machine ever to wear a frilly pink apron. Together, they protect Haruka from the legions of war robots that are still being produced in automated factories.



CONTAINS EPISODES 1-8

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Anime Works

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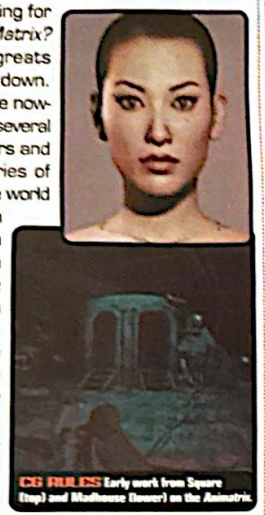
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WHO NEEDS KEANU?

The Matrix Goes Anime

Climbing the walls waiting for the sequel to *The Matrix*? Well, some anime greats have something to calm you down.

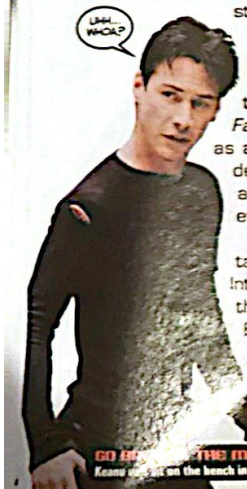
Recently, the makers of the now-classic sci-fi tale approached several well-known Japanese directors and animators to produce a series of animated shorts based on the world of *The Matrix*, the 1999 film starring Keanu Reeves as an unwitting cyber-Messiah thrust into a dystopian future where machines have risen up to enslave mankind.



CG RULES Early work from Square (top) and Madhouse (lower) on the *Animatrix*.

"*The Animatrix* will take the world we're in today to the world of *The Matrix* and how we got there," explains Joel Silver, producer of the original film. Plans call for 10 episodes, five of which will be written by *Matrix* creators Andy and Larry Wachowski, with the other five to be created by some of anime's hottest names.

One of the most anticipated pieces will come from the mind of Yoshiaki Kawajiri of Madhouse Studios, who directed the cult classic *Ninja Scroll* as well as the recent *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*. His story is a dark ninja epic that will be rooted within the framework of *The Matrix* mythos. Another story will come from *Blue Submarine No. Six* director Mahiro Maeda. His installment promises to showcase stunning CG imagery created by the digital wizards at Square (*Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*) and will act as a prequel to *The Matrix*, providing details on the war between mankind and the machines—and how man eventually lost.



GO BACK TO THE MALL Keanu reacts on the bench in *Animatrix*.

For now, *The Animatrix* is tentatively set to make its debut on the Internet, with the possibility of a DVD that collects them all to follow later. Either way, the first wave of shorts will hit some time this fall and is sure to scratch the itch of fans who can't wait until summer 2003 for the sequel, *The Matrix Reloaded*. ■ James McDonald

SPEEDLINES

LITTLE BITTY BUZZ BITS TO CHEW ON

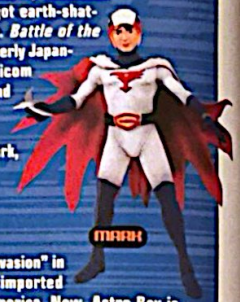


"OH" WHAT A FEELING!

4Kids Entertainment Inc. recently announced that toy giant Mattel is on-board to do toys based on the card-wielding glory that is *Yu-Gi-Oh*. Mattel scored the master toy license to the hot Japanese property, gaining the right to market the toys worldwide (except in Asia) for several years. Fans can look for Mattel's first products later in 2002.

DIAMOND'S GOTCHA, MAN

Diamond Comics Distributors has got earth-shattering plans for *Gatchaman* (a.k.a. *Battle of the Planets*)! DCD will be importing formerly Japanese-exclusive goods like the Medicom figures, while sister company Diamond Select Toys is producing an onslaught of all-new action figures, including new 7-inch figures of Mark, Princess and Keyop.



ASTRONOMICAL PLANS

Astro Boy led the original "anime invasion" in the 1960s, when Osamu Tezuka's imported manga creation became a hit in America. Now, Astro Boy is ready to take back the title - the original manga is being printed for the first time in the USA by Dark Horse Comics, The Right Stuff is releasing the original black and white episodes on DVD and there's even a computer-animated feature film planned for 2004 release!

SPIRITED BOX OFFICE

Now that Hayao Miyazaki's *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi (Spirited Away)* has conquered the Japanese box office, Disney and Dreamworks are battling over the rights to release the animated feature in America. Although recent attempts like *Princess Mononoke* failed at the box office, anticipation is still high that anime will be red-hot in US theaters. ■ Adam Patyk



ANI-OOPS!

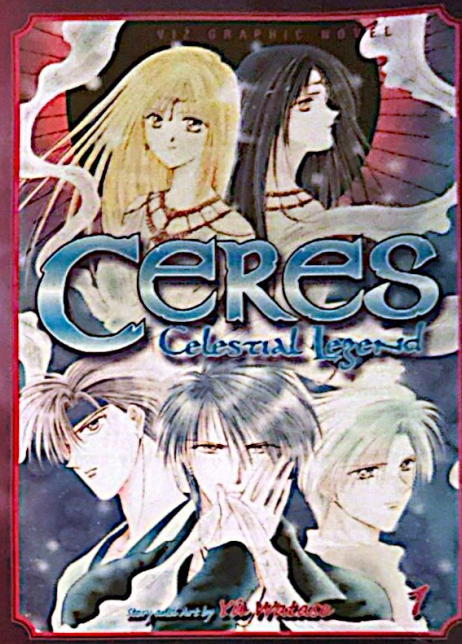
- *Fushigi Yugi* by Yu Watase is published by Viz; publisher was mis-named in issue #1.
- CDJapan's manga website is www.cdjapan.co.jp/e-manga. The address was incorrectly presented in issue #1.

AN ANCIENT JAPANESE LEGEND... A VENGEFUL CELESTIAL BEING... A POWER-HUNGRY FAMILY... AND TWO TEENAGE TWINS THAT HOLD THE KEY TO ALL OF THEIR DESTINIES.

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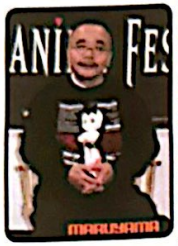
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RETRO METRO

Metropolis' Rintaro and Maruyama answer to the *Invasion*





Slowly working its way across the US, director Rintaro and animation producer Masao Maruyama's movie *Metropolis* has been garnering critical acclaim. Not bad for a movie based on a comic created over 50 years ago, even if it was penned by the "god of manga" and creator of *Astro Boy* Osamu Tezuka. We had a chance to speak with Rintaro-san and Maruyama-san about *Metropolis* and anime.

AI: Why did you and screenwriter Katsuhiro Otomo decide to make a movie of *Metropolis*, 50 years after it was created?

Rintaro: **Mr. Otomo and I both decided to do one "daring" project. Making a 50-year old manga into an anime would be a novelty, a new thing. No one ever created animation based on the works Tezuka-san did before *Astro Boy*.**

AI: Tezuka did many other manga before *Astro Boy*. Why pick *Metropolis* to animate?

R: **I like science fiction a lot. *Metropolis* is one of the most interesting science fiction works available. It's the kind of style which is very urban, and the robots—well, this type of imaginative work is something I particularly like.**

AI: How did you decide to visually update it? What did you keep of Tezuka-san's, and what did you want to do that was new?

Maruyama: **After 50 years old, remaking it as an anime is a new project in itself. Rintaro-san and I wanted to renew the story and the characters; we wanted to make a combination of something retro and something new. In terms of the newness, we wanted to challenge the digital aspect of the film, but keep the characters looking classic, like Tezuka's original characters. I was confident that *Metropolis* was appropriate for it.**

AI: What was it like to work with Osamu Tezuka early in your career, on the *Astro Boy* TV show?

R: **Tezuka was really interesting. At the same time it was really hard. I learned a lot about how to develop a story from him.**

AI: How was it hard?

R: **(laughs) He was a slave driver! What he says today may be very different from what he says tomorrow. He was such a talented man, but he just assumed that other people had the same kind of talent and as much of it—which wasn't true.**

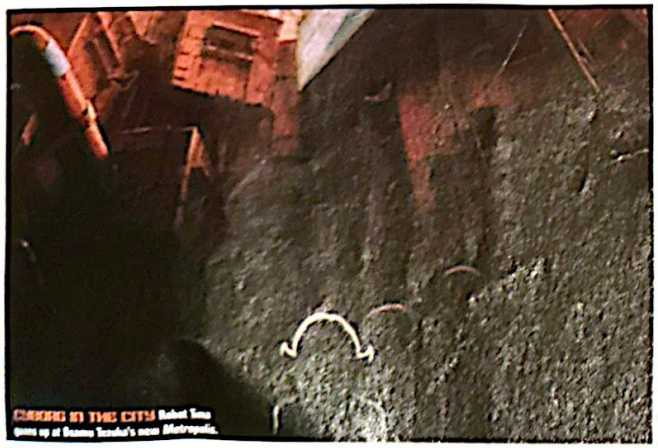
AI: Both you and Otomo have been known for edgier works like *X/1999* and *Akira*—was there any worry from Japanese audiences about you doing *Metropolis*?

M: **They were really excited. Japanese audiences had a really favorable response when they heard it was being done—but they were excited more by Rintaro-san and Otomo-san's revival of Tezuka's manga than the manga itself.**

AI: What was the hardest part of making Metropolis?

R: **Making *Metropolis*, we challenged two things. One is integrating digital and traditional cel animation techniques; the second is blending that with the old Disney style of animation. That's definitely what Tezuka-san would have wanted.**

—Robert Bricken



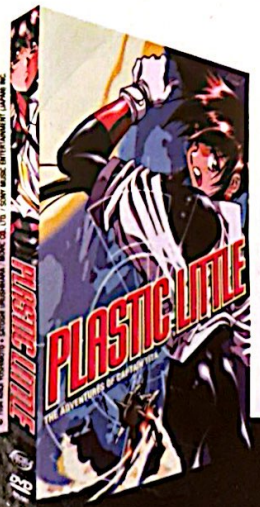
CYBORG IN THE CITY Robot Tma goes up at Osamu Tezuka's neon *Metropolis*.

You're not going to read this are you?

You're just going to stare at the picture of Tita and Mei Lin, the smokin' hot stars of ADV FILMS' new PLASTIC LITTLE DVD. I could write whatever I wanted here and you wouldn't even notice. Like purple monkey bean paste underwear. Or flying couch dribble sweat blues. You wouldn't know the difference.

But in the off chance someone is actually reading this, I should mention PLASTIC LITTLE is a fun, action-packed anime you won't have to think about too hard to enjoy, filled to the brim with all sorts of sexy ladies like these two. And, for the first time ever, PLASTIC LITTLE comes with a specially designed **JIGGLE COUNTER** option, which counts how many times... well, you can figure it out.

SO BUY **PLASTIC LITTLE** ON DVD.
AND TAKE THESE LADIES HOME WITH YOU!



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LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

SPIKE SPIEGEL VS. DIRTY PAIR



Spike

27	AGE	19 (both)
O	BLOOD TYPE	A+ (both)
6'1"	HEIGHT	5'7" (Kei) 5'6" (Yuri)
Mars	HOME PLANET	Nhioghi (Kei) Koucha (Yuri)
Any...please!	FAVORITE FOOD	Cheesecake



Dirty Pair

SPIKE SPIEGEL: Reckless and impulsive, Spike Spiegel knows how to hold his own. This crook-turned-interplanetary-bounty-hunter is a master of Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do fighting style. He's already died once, and even that couldn't stop him—though he just might starve to death if he and Jet Black, his partner aboard the ship Bebop, can't finally earn a few bucks.

DIRTY PAIR: The World Welfare & Works Association's (3WA) top agents (or "trouble consultants") are Kei and Yuri, code-named "Lovely Angels"—but better known throughout the universe as "the Dirty Pair" for the path of fiery mayhem and property damage they leave behind. Often their hunger for battle is dwarfed only by their hunger for boyfriends.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Spike stamps out his third cigarette and coolly crouches in front of the door, picking the lock with nimble fingers. The door belongs to the hideout of Garr Feerudo, a half-man, half-cat creature who happens to be the most notorious criminal on this entire planet of half-man, half-cat creatures.

A low whistle over his left shoulder is all the warning he receives. Spike springs frantically to one side as the door explodes in a ball of orange flame. His fetid, mangy cat-pelt disguise flutters to the ground.

"Kei! I told you to wait!" A brunette and a redhead wearing—well, almost nothing—step from the shadows. The redhead clutches a smoking cannon bigger than she is.

The redhead rolls her eyes. "Look, Yuri, the cat dude's fine—hey, where'd he go?"

Kei is disarmed with a blindingly fast kick, and another blow sends Yuri's weapon—with Yuri still attached—flying through the air. A series of rapid-fire punches stagger Kei. She trips over a giant pile of cat litter and lands flat on her rear end.

Spike pauses to light another cigarette. He sees the 3 million woolong bounty—and the badly needed repairs for the Bebop—evaporating before his eyes.

A laser blast cleaves his cigarette in two. Spike flips out of the way to avoid the now-recovered Yuri's fire, but he flips right into Kei, who doubles him over with a jackhammer-like punch to the midsection.

"Sorry, pal, this is 3WA business," Yuri says. "And—wow—you're kinda cute!"

"Back off, Yuri!" Kei says, cinching in her choke hold even tighter. "He's mine!"

With one fluid motion, Spike escapes Kei's choke and conks Kei and Yuri's heads together. With a smile, he backpedals away from them.

"That does it!" Kei screams, and pulls the pin on an electron grenade.

"Kei, no!" Yuri yells.

THE WINNAH:

When the smoke clears, Spike is gone. Kei sits on the rubble and starts beating the ground with her fists. "I hate this planet!" she cries. "Everything smells like cat pee."

"C'mon, Kei," Yuri says. "Let's go tell the boss the bad news."

Are there any colossal anime match-ups you'd like to see on these pages? Let us know at AnimeInvasion@aol.com now

nth's battle drawn by PHIL MOY



BATTLE ON!

BY MATT ALT

The battle between good and evil gets the darkness and violence it deserves in Alex Ross' new *Battle of the Planets*

America is finally going to get to see *Battle of the Planets*. Warts and all.

If you're an older anime fan, you remember it as the American version of the classic Japanese cartoon *Gatchaman*. And if you're not...you're seriously missing out! But no worries. American super-illustrator Alex Ross is overseeing an all-new comic book version that's set to be released by Top Cow comics in the summer of 2002.

The series that introduced '70s Saturday morning cereal munchers to Japanese animation, *Battle of the Planets* told the story of the G-Force, five strapping young heroes dedicated to fighting evil the only way they knew how: dressed in bird suits. Trained by the shadowy International Science Foundation and packing all sorts of high-tech weaponry, the team was an intergalactic paramilitary wrecking crew.

Their space-y weapons, transforming vehicles and giant-sized eyes blew American audiences away. But we only saw half the story.

The original version, *Gatchaman*, was edgy, dark and brooding, featuring our heroes' troubled pasts, inter-team tensions and barely controlled tendencies to wreak havoc. When it was brought to the U.S., importers Sandy Frank Productions sanitized the content of the show for American kids, going so far as to introduce totally new characters such as the comical sidekick robot 7-Zark-7 to cover up violent scenes.

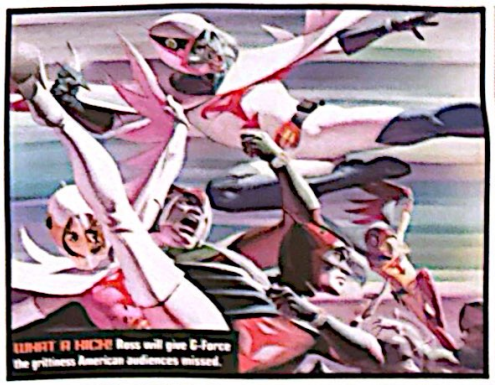
Now with the help of master comic artist Alex Ross—the man behind DC Comics' *Kingdom Come* and the snazzy new Academy Awards poster—American audiences will get a back-pocket version of the gritty story our television parents never let us see.

"We're going to pull back to the roots and explain the gaps, the holes left by the edits," explains Ross. "Who were these guys? Why are they doing this if they're so young? In comic books, we have more leeway with violence and tone."

Will fans finally see 7-Zark-7 granted the painful death he so richly deserves? Ross is tight-lipped about the specifics, but promises that if he does make an appearance, "he won't be in there as a page-killer to obscure the violence."

ON THE MARK... ...*Planets* star Mark comes back to ... Ross' new comic.

Scanned with CamScanner



WHAT A RICH! Ross will give G-Force the grittiness American audiences missed.

BIRDS ON THE BRAIN

As a longtime fan of the English version, Ross leapt at the opportunity to work on the project.

"I loved the show as a kid because they all had long hair," explained Ross to *Anime Invasion*. "I was a kid growing up in the South, and I had long hair, and that wasn't so encouraged. But basically, in spite of their looks, they're a military unit — an extreme special-forces outfit. And I was delighted by the team aspect."

Old-school fans need not fret about an American fanboy spanking up the works. The classical elements of what made the story so great won't be compromised at all. The heroes will sport their original Japanese names, and shadows of the old stories will be reflected in the new. "The priority will be on maintaining the stylistic flair of the original Japanese series," says Ross. "What I loved about the show was the quality of movement; it was fast and furious, gutsy. And the sense of violence survived even with all the edits in the English version." In short, it'll be the best of both worlds. The comic will feature extended descriptions of the heroes' backgrounds, drawing links between the characters that will smooth out the differences between *Battle of the Planets* and *Gatchaman*.

Ross is aiming for a comic book that closely resembles the look of the old show, sticking with the anime-drenched hard-boiled style of the original. It's a blended look that's somewhat "manga-like" while maintaining the pacing and speed of the animation. Ross will be acting as an editorial and artistic overseer, providing descriptive thumbnails and art guides for the yet-to-be-chosen regular artist to follow. Ross explains that finding the right collaborator for the job has been a time-consuming process. "We want someone who really likes the show, yet has a distinctive style of their own, and that's been difficult."

The first issue hasn't been penned yet, but Ross and Top Cow are tentatively aiming for a summer 2002 release.

PLANET-WIDE ASSAULT

This year is shaping up to be a veritable paradise for *Battle of the Planets* fans. Not only will a new comic be hitting the shelves, but fans will see official apparel such as shirts and caps from Bioworkscape, action figures and statuettes from Diamond Select, and even a CD of the music from the show will see release within the year.

GOTCHA, MAN!

SEEN *BATTLE OF THE PLANETS*? THEN YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

Battle of the Planets might have been a smash hit here in the States, but the sad fact is that Japanese fans got to see the weird stuff that was really going on. Think we're lyin'? Just take a gander at some of the differences between ***Battle of the Planets*** and ***Gatchaman***, the Japanese original.

SWITCHED AT BIRTH?
Arch-villain Berg Katse, known as "Zoltar" to *Battle of the Planets* fans, turned out to be a bit more than meets the eye in the Japanese version. In fact, he—er, she? — was actually a...well, we're still not sure. Not quite a hermaphrodite, not quite a cross-dresser... we'll let you connect the dots.



ALL DRESSED UP Zoltar (rear), the arch-villain of G-Force, went all ways.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF
Battle of the Planets fans never got the chance to witness it, but Chief Anderson, the benevolent coordinator of G-Force, was brutally tortured and killed in front of the entire team during a later episode of the Japanese version.

G.I. JO
Jo, otherwise known as Jason, reigns as second-in-command of the G-team. Although *Battle of the Planets* fans saw a little of his dark side, it was only revealed in *Gatchaman* that he suffered from horrible brain damage as a result of a childhood bomb attack.

OFF-KEYOP
Jinpei, known as Keyop to American fans, is the youngest of the G-Force team. *Battle of the Planets* portrayed him as a genetic misfit that could barely speak a sentence without starting to warble like an actual bird. In *Gatchaman*, he was a totally normal kid. (On second thought, maybe Americans got some of the weird stuff, too...) — MA

For those who just can't get enough of the original cartoon, *Gatchaman*, check out the *Battle of the Planets* DVDs from Rhino. They include two *BOTP* episodes, the corresponding original, uncut Japanese *Gatchaman* episodes and then the second American version of the shows known as *G-Force*.

Phil Oldham, who oversees the Battle of the Planets franchise for Sandy Frank Productions, told *Anime Invasion* that his company is "working hard, and having fun, re-launching Battle of the Planets all over again."

And while Ross' comic, T-shirts action figures will be coming out like wild fire, Oldham has an answer for another big question.

"Our expectation is to be back on TV in the US, and throughout most of the rest of the world, within the next year."

Contributor Matt Alt has his own robot which he uses to block out the violent scenes in his life.



ANIME Smackdown!

The Top 10 GREATEST FIGHTS of All Time!

By Matthew Alt, Robert Bricken and Jonathan Clements

Invading demon armies, deadly samurai vendettas and legions of giant robots all have one thing in common—they're full of open cans of whup-ass!

We don't care if the baddie is a tentacle-waving monster from another dimension, a misunderstood android or even the girl who wouldn't let you copy her homework. We just want to sit in front of our DVD player and watch the good guy pound his (her? its?) face into the dirt.

For that matter, let's have the good guys get their asses kicked also. And we're not just talking about these mini-skirted schoolgirls or expendable hunky foreign dudes. No, this genre isn't afraid of sneak attacks or plain old-fashioned dirty fighting in the name of "heroics." Which side is *Devilman* on again? Isn't the heroine of *Blood* supposed to be a vampire? Even the cute little Pocket Monsters like nothing better than beating the crap out of each other.

The average anime hero is going to lose his planet, get beaten to a pulp, be tempted by the dark side and lead humanity to victory, all in just 13 episodes. The bulk of TV anime episodes guarantee at least one punch-up per show, giving us literally thousands of candidates to pour through to find the 10 best anime fights ever. We saw everything, from the martial arts of *Fist of the North Star* to the battleship-throwing of *End of Evangelion*. We've debated the merits of swords versus laser cannons, martial prowess versus psychic powers... even scissors-paper-stone. This is the result: our list of the all-time greatest anime fights.

If you don't agree with us, shoot us an e-mail to say so. Otherwise, sit back, relax and enjoy the blood and guts.

10: GIRL ON GIRL!

The Card: *Project A-ko*'s red-haired superheroine A-ko Magami vs. prissy rich-beeyoch B-ko Daitokuji.

The Battle: No quest to save the planet here. Rather, it's the alphabetically named girls A-ko and B-ko of *Project A-ko* jealously fighting over the non-lesbian friendship of the infantile blonde bubblehead, C-ko. It's a delicious catfight, and like so many, it starts in the schoolyard.

B-ko Daitokuji's brought a suit of armor to school that matches A-ko's superhuman strength, and she begins with a [illegible] punch to A-ko's solar plexus, hurling her through a window into the school! The rampage *beautifully* [illegible] classroom after classroom flash, we miss [illegible]

Sna[illegible]'s ankle with an electric whip and slams Mag[illegible] the floor. It's [illegible] much for [illegible] used super-babe, who runs for town with B-ko's rockets, demolishing everything behind her! Blinded by amazonian fury, the girls tear through the streets destroying buildings and traffic, oblivious to the 4-mile-long *alien mothership* launching an all-out invasion. That's right—they're tearing into each other so much that they don't notice the *alien invasion* right around them!

Well, A-ko does notice a tank to throw at B-ko (sweet move), but before they know it, C-ko is kidnapped by the aliens, who believe her to be their long-lost princess! Whatever—the girls are forced to call off their squabble and rescue their friend.

The Winner: It's a draw, but B-ko is waiting outside the school gates for a re-match the next day.

Catch It: *Project A-ko* is available on VHS [illegible].95) and DVD ($26.99) from Central Park Media.



nine



Jack Grey

9: SCOUTS DIS-HONOUR

The Card: *Sailor Moon's* five Sailor Scouts vs. the evil Queen Beryl and her baddies

The Battle: Straight from the Negaverse with a hatred for girls in sailor suits, Queen Beryl's out to wreck the Earth with her weather machine. Through the rain, sleet and hail come the Sailor Scouts to stop her: Sailors Moon (Serena), Jupiter, Mercury, Venus and Mars!

Going after Beryl at the North Pole, cute girls are freezing their mini-skirts off, but they're not as bad off as the girls Beryl sends to face them. The Gloom and Gloom Girls are [illegible]. Yikes! Well, nothing [illegible]s you up like getting [illegible]ed—Sailor Jupiter is electrocuted to death, Mercury is boiled alive inside a volcano, Venus is dragged [illegible]neath the ice and tortured, but [illegible]ages to kill a Gloom Girl and herself; Sailor Mars dies killing the last of the bad girls in a vicious fight. Yikes again!

With her friends dead, Serena's a nervous wreck in time for the ultimate agony—in Beryl's lair, boyfriend Darien has turned to the dark side! Okay, Serena's love brings him back, but then *Darien* dies while shielding her from Beryl's attack. Serena's utter desolation calls her friends' power from beyond the grave, and Beryl is blasted back to the Negaverse by their combined energy.

The Winner: As the last one standing, Serena wins the trophy for Good.

Catch It: *Sailor Moon: Good Queen, Bad Queen* is available from Toon-Time Video on VHS ($1[illegible]), but the unedited version showing this battle is only available in Japanese from Toei Video (good luck).

8: HOLY CHOW

The Card: *Evangelion's* Unit 01 (piloted by Shinji Ikari) vs. invading Angel Zeruel

The Battle: Zeruel is the 14th unstoppable war-angel sent to retrieve the entity known as Adam from NERV's headquarters. If it succeeds, it's the end of the world!

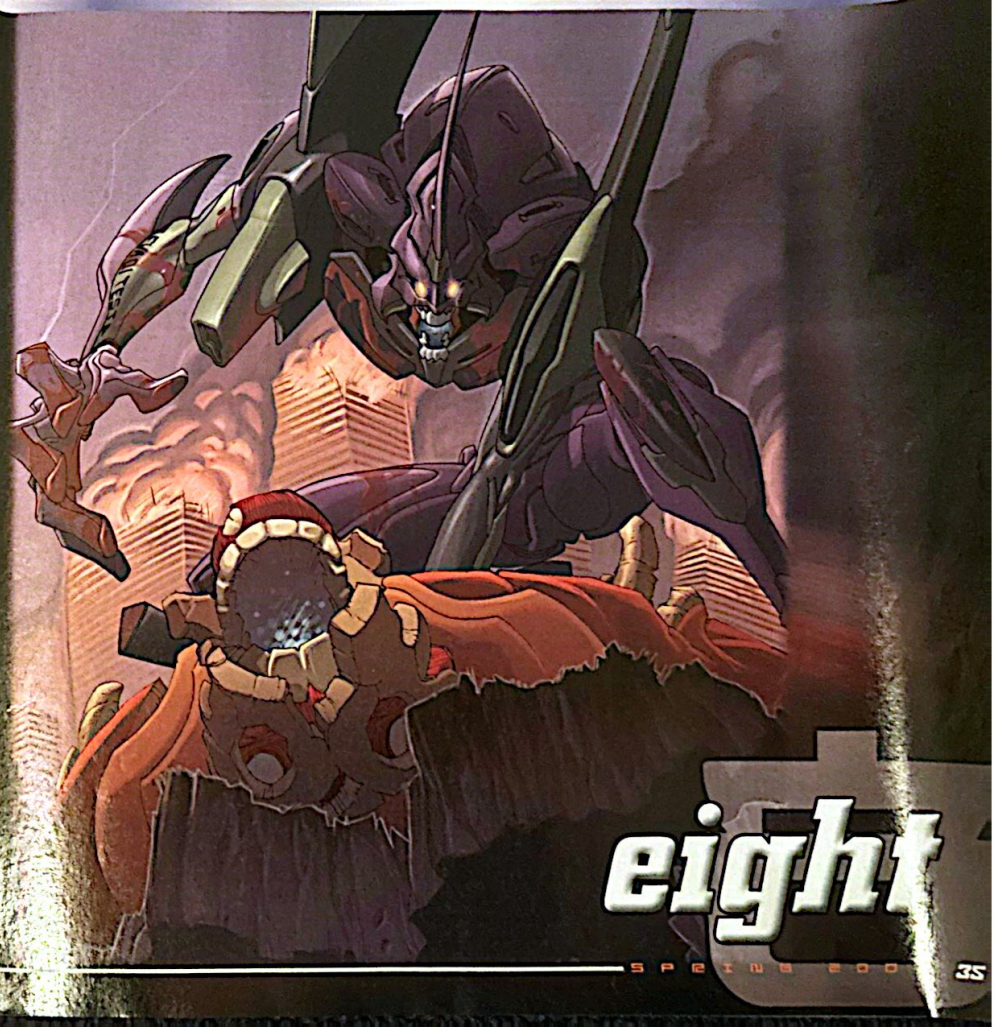
Smashing into the complex, Zeruel's about to get what it wants when Shinji (in Evangelion Unit 01) tears through the wall and floors it with a punch to the jaw! Woo hoo!

Shinji is furious that he's saving his NERV-leader dad, who abandoned him as a child, and is ready to kick some ass. Zeruel slices off Unit 01's arm, but Shinji brings the battle outside. Out in the open, the raging Shinji tries to tear out Zeruel's heart, but suddenly runs out of power. Zeruel grabs Unit 01 by the head and swings it into a hillside, tearing open its breastplate with a fountain of blood. Game over; we're all gonna die!

But wait! Shinji's EVA Unit isn't a robot—it's a vicious living predator barely contained by man-made restraints, and the damage has just set it free. Roaring in berserk rage, it grabs Zeruel and takes a bite out of its torn, quivering flesh. As the onlookers gasp in horror, it starts to feed, with its pilot, Shinji, trapped inside!

The Winner: We're calling this one a double forfeit, since Unit 01 is disqualified for eating its opponent.

Catch It: The eating contest went down in *Evangelion* DVD Collection #6 from AD Vision ($29.98), or Genesis 0:10 on VHS ($29.95 sub, $24.95 dub).



eight

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seven



Jim Calafiore

7: SHOWDOWN IN NEO-TOKYO

The Card: *Akira*'s good-hearted biker boy Shotaro Kaneda vs. angry mutant Tetsuo Shima

The Battle: This one's been building for years, as Kaneda and Tetsuo developed a brotherly rivalry growing up as orphans in Neo-Tokyo. Drugged by the army to give him unstable superpowers, Tetsuo's got a migraine after trashing half the city. Kaneda's finally fed up with Tetsuo's crap.

The boys start with name-calling. "Cry-baby!" "Rain in the ass!" Harsh stuff. Tetsuo cracks first, but Kaneda shoots from the hip with his weapon—a stolen military laser rifle. Tetsuo dodges and levitates Kaneda into the air, but in a lucky reflex action, Kaneda [illegible] a huge cloud of dust and gets away. He then [illegible] on Tetsuo's chest... with no effect! As one, the boys realize how invincible Tetsuo has become! Kaneda fires again, but his batteries are dead...

Now the tables are turned—with no weaponry left, Kaneda dares Tetsuo to fight with his fists. Tetsuo is too bust-laughing to [illegible] from above—the army wants to kill [illegible] satellite cannon, and the blast [illegible] Kaneda prepares to [illegible] a rock, but his [illegible] the satellite [illegible] Tetsuo? [illegible] military's inter- [illegible] ks.

[illegible] ($39.98)

6: END GAME

The Card: *Dragon Ball Z*'s Gohan, son of Goku, versus the most powerful android ever created, Cell.

The Battle: Certain he was unmatched in power, the arrogant, hateful and nigh-invincible Cell declared a tournament to be fought. If he was not defeated, the Earth would be destroyed! Everyone thought Goku was Earth's only chance, but after a long fight, Goku conceded to Cell—and told his son Gohan to fight instead! Oh, crap!

Although he was unsure of himself, Gohan stayed blow-for-blow with Cell, until Cell killed one of Gohan's friends. Enraged, Gohan beat Cell so badly he forced the evil android to self-destruct, but Goku teleported him away from Earth at the cost of his own life.

But not so fast—Cell returned, and Gohan was forced to face him again, without Goku watching over him. A titanic tussle transpired as the two fought brutally, shaking mountains and wrecking the countryside. They traded kicks, punches and blasts, until Cell broke Gohan's arm, and at last they locked themselves into a contest of energy blasts. Cell slowly began to overcome young Gohan, but knowing the fate of the world if he failed, Gohan found his inner strength and (with help from the reformed villain Vegeta) blew Cell away for good.

The Winner: Gohan wins the day and becomes the star of *Dragon Ball Z* without his dad.

Catch It: This terrific tussle will be on video later this year from FUNimation.



six

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five



Ed McGuiness

5: RYU & KEN'S BIG FINALE

The Card: *Street Fighter 2*'s devoted muscle-couple Ryu and Ken vs. cloaked, leather-lovin' M. Bison.

The Battle: M. Bison's scheme to build an army based on Ryu's abilities just fell apart. All he has is Ryu's bud Ken, whom he's been mind-probing. Ryu wants his friend back. There's a lot of anger in the air.

Tracking Ryu to the mountains of Thailand, Bison hurls the captive Ken to the other side of the valley and blocks Ryu's path to rescue him. Ryu tries to slap him to death but Bison throws him back with an energy bolt. Bison dodges a succession of super-fast punches from Ryu, then hurls him from mid-air.

Ken rushes to save the day, but falls over. Ryu and Bison look at him (the pot-head is confused) and Bison begin grappling with each other, refusing to budge in the struggle of both their lives! Ken comes to and tries to dislodge Bison with a double-kick, but Bison grabs him in a headlock and smashes his face a lot. Ryu's punches then come so fast that they can only be seen on slow-mo, but Bison grabs his head and casts him aside. Bison is wounded for the first time.

Ken and Ryu step back and look into each other's eyes, realizing they are together again. They throw Hadoken energy bolts, driving Bison back into the airplane, where he conveniently explodes. Boom!

The Winners: Ryu and Ken, together again.

Catch it: *Street Fighter 2: The Animated Movie* is available from Manga Entertainment on DVD ($29.99) and VHS ($14.98).

4: POP MUSIC MAYHEM

The Card: *Robotech*'s beleaguered crew of the SDF-1 Macross vs. the repulsively large Zentraedi

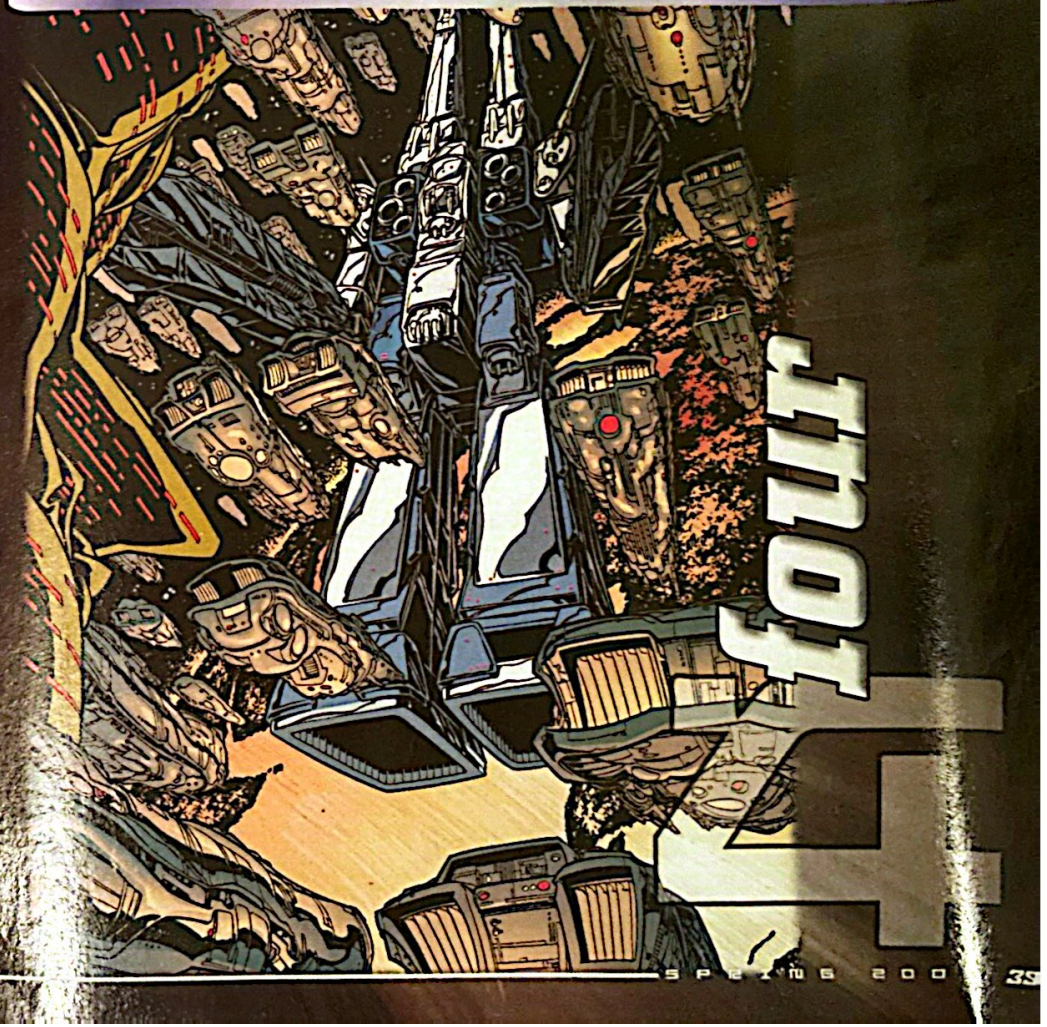
The Battle: The first decade of the new millennium ends on a sour note when a heavily armed fleet of Zentraedi war ships descends on Earth in 2009. Fleet Commander Breetai immediately begins an all-out attack to recover the mysterious Super Dimensional Fortress Macross, a crashed alien relic recovered and rebuilt by Earth's military. Although Breetai eventually signs a peace treaty, his unamused Supreme Commander Dolza decides to settle the score personally with some *4 million* Zentraedi battleships. Uh oh.

With Earth surrounded by an uncountable number of enemy ships, things are looking grim. But the humans have an enormous, top-secret underground laser weapon called the Grand Cannon in Alaska, and the military uses it to sweep the sky with a Zentraedi-roasting beam of death. When the remainder of Dolza's fleet strikes back and annihilates the Grand Cannon and nearly *every human living on Earth's surface*, the crew of the SDF-1 gets even by, uh, broadcasting footage of teen cutie Lynn Minmei and her horrible pop songs. Go get 'em!

Backed by Breetai's renegade ships, the SDF-1 launches an all-out kamikaze attack against the now-demoralized main Zentraedi fleet, using hundreds of transforming Valkyrie fighters and missile-equipped Destroids to give Dolza the comeuppance he so richly deserves.

The Winner: The SDF-1 crew successfully defeats the fleet that just killed off most of humanity. Yay.

Catch it: ADV Films' *Robotech* DVD collection 3 wraps up the end of the Macross Saga for $44.98.



four

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Jim Leroy

3: USE YOUR HEAD!

Ninja Scroll's ninja Jubei vs. evil, superhuman smuggler Genma.

Genma faces Jubei in the hold of a burning galleon, full of gold to fund an army to conquer Japan. Jubei is pissed—his girlfriend just died, and it was Genma's fault. But the feeling's mutual. This deal took years for Genma to set up, and it's ruined. Someone's gotta pay.

Jubei cuts into Genma good, and a battle ensues that could go either way until Genma catches Jubei's sword arm. He [illegible] squeezes until the bone pops.

Genma then throws the crippled Jubei against a wall and, with the ship burning, beats his opponent until he's [illegible]. Genma taunts Jubei about his regenerative powers. No matter how good Jubei is, Genma [illegible] will heal almost instantly. Jubei doesn't stand a chance.

Or does he? Using his Bit-of-String ninja technique, Jubei winches his sword into his other hand, and as Genma prepares a killing blow, he slices off Genma's arm! But Genma simply kicks Jubei to the floor and reattaches it. Jubei then head-butts him *15 times* until Genma's head is a bloody pulp, stabs him in the stomach and guts him like a fish. Genma starts to come together once more, but is washed into a tide of molten gold, which hardens and drags him to the sea-bed. *That* should do it.

The Winner: The Tokugawa Shogunate, which gets to rule Japan unopposed until 1853.

Catch It: *Ninja Scroll* is available from Manga Entertainment on DVD ($29.95) and VHS ([illegible] dub and $24.99 sub).



E.J. Su

2: EARTH MUST DIE

The Card: *Gundam*'s moody robot-whiz Amuro Ray vs. Zeon army pilot Char Aznable, "The Red Comet".

The Battle: Amuro and Char never did get along particularly well. They fought on opposite sides of the One Year War and even managed to fall in love with the same woman. Their feud came to a head with her accidental death 15 years ago. Now, it's payback time.

Char has founded a new organization called the Neo-Zeon and plans to drop several huge asteroids onto Earth's surface from orbit. An enraged Amuro rises to the challenge, taking the reins of the Earth Federation's newest prototype Mobile Suit: Nu-Gundam, equipped with cutting-edge "Psycho-Frame" technology that lets him command a payload of mini-weapons with mind power.

However, Char has a similar mech called Sazabi, and the two battle it out in low Earth orbit as the asteroids begin to fall.

Amuro's comrades manage to detonate one of the asteroids just as Amuro gets the upper hand in the giant-robot battle, forcing Char to eject from his crippled Sazabi. But one of the killer space rocks continues its descent. In a last-ditch effort to save the planet, Amuro takes hold of the meteor and uses Nu-Gundam's Psycho-Frame to amplify his psychic ability, gradually deflecting the rock from Earth's surface.

The Winner: Amuro saves the day, saves the Earth and kicks some ass.

Catch It: Pick up *Gundam: Char's Counterattack* later this year from Bandai Entertainment.

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one



Jack Gray

1: THE BATTLE BEGINS!

The Card: *Dragon Ball Z*'s recently resurrected Goku vs. the prince of all Saiyans, Vegeta

The Battle: When the last Saiyan came to Earth, Goku had to sacrifice himself to save the world. Now two new, more powerful Saiyans have arrived—and Goku, after a wish from the Dragon Balls, rushes back from the afterlife to save Earth from destruction. When he arrives, he finds four of his friends dead at the hands of the weaker Saiyan, Nappa.

Defeating Nappa with the help of the powerful Kaio-Ken technique learned in the afterlife, Goku goes toe-to-toe with Vegeta. The two turns back and forth as they each punish each other, changing themselves into pounds. But even the might of Goku's 3x Kaio-Ken Vegeta cannot be defeated—and Vegeta transforms into Oozaru (giant monkey!) form and begins thrashing Goku, until their friend Yajirobe sneaks up behind him and cuts off his tail, reverting him to normal. Darn, we like monkeys.

But Vegeta still fights on, even withstanding the powerful Spirit Bomb technique—until finally, Goku lies helpless on the ground. But seeing his father pummeled, Goku's 4-year-old son, Gohan, suddenly grows back his tail, turning Oozaru and stomping Vegeta flat.

The Winner: Gohan beats Vegeta, but Goku lets him go instead of seeing him killed.

Catch it: To catch the battle that initiated the incredible action of *DBZ*, pick up [illegible]8 ("Showdown") from Pioneer/FUNimation [illegible]5 ($9.98) or DVD ($14.98).

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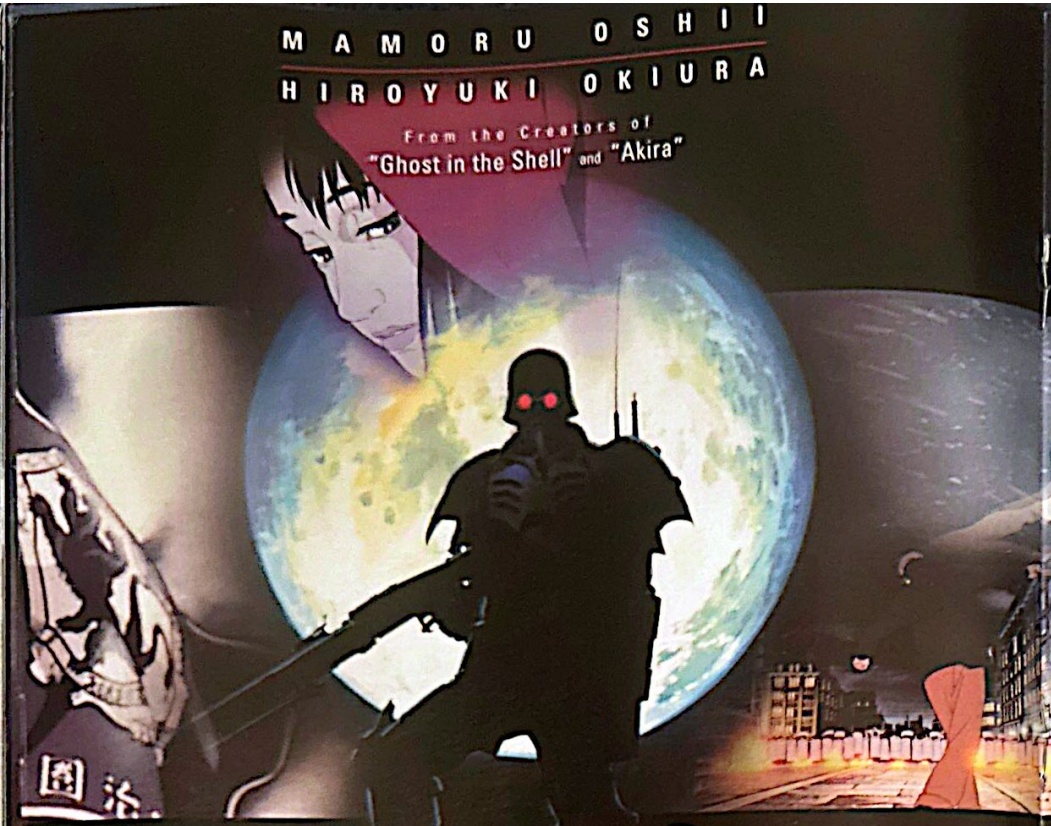
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To Catch a Thief

BY TOM ROOT

Anime Invasion explains why you'll love master anime criminal Lupin III

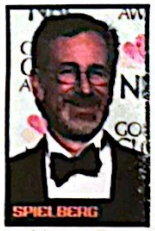
The world's greatest thief finally has his eyes set on America. His name is Lupin the III. He's pilfered from the Titanic. His schemes have toppled rulers. He even once stole the Statue of Liberty.

In the real world, his exploits are no less legendary. This guy's been around and consistently popular in Japan for 35 years. He's conquered manga, television, video games and movies.

And now he's on his way to America. Courtesy of FUNimation, the folks responsible for bringing us *DBZ*, come 10 movies on DVD starring the gentleman thief supreme this April. Nobody's wallet is safe.

Looking for a reason to turn your valuables over to the greatest thief anime has ever known? Then read on! By the time you're finished, we guarantee: Lupin will be on *your* Most Wanted list, too.

Even Steven Spielberg thinks Lupin kicks ass!



Just how far-reaching is Lupin's appeal? A young Steven Spielberg himself saw the Lupin movie *Castle of Cagliostro* (actually the second Lupin flick) at the Cannes Film Festival in 1979 and proclaimed it one of the greatest adventure movies of all time. And you can probably trust that Spielberg guy on such a subject.

Castle of Cagliostro (currently out on DVD from Manga Entertainment) is often cited as one of the greatest anime films ever, by fans and critics alike both here and in Japan. And it's no wonder. It

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was the work of legendary anime director Hayao Miyazaki—you know, the fella who went on to put out masterpieces like *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Princess Mononoke*. Oh, and his latest anime film, *Spirited Away*, is not only the highest-grossing Japanese film of all time, but the highest-grossing non-American produced film in the world.

OUR GANG

LEARN TO IDENTIFY THE WORLD'S MOST WANTED CRIMINALS!



LUPIN III The world's greatest thief is the grandson of the famous Arsène Lupin (see sidebar, page 50). As perverted as he is cunning, he's forever failing to score with the duplicitous Fujiko. As crooks go, Lupin's heart is usually in the right place—he tends to steal from rich scumbags for more dastardly than he is, and he never, ever fails to help a lady in distress. Or with a pretty face.



JIGEN The eternally hat-wearing Jigen is an unparalleled marksman, and Lupin's cohort in crime. In fact, the brim of his ever-present, face-obscuring fedora aids in his quick-draw aiming. His grim personality provides a balance for Lupin's sunny disposition. You can count the times you actually see his eyes in all the movies on one hand.



GOEMON ISHIKAWA Lupin's other partner, Goemon is a stoic samurai with little patience for Lupin's shenanigans. Goemon's swordsmanship is on a par with Jigen's marksmanship—he's unbelievably skilled, and his sword actually cuts through steel. Goemon is a descendent of one of the most famous samurai in Japanese history. He's also promised to kill Lupin, although no one knows when, and he really doesn't seem to be in any hurry.



FUJIKO MINE Most of the sex appeal of the show comes from the top-heavy Fujiko Mine. Her name is a play on Japan's famous Mt. Fuji, and her mountainous physique is her greatest asset. She uses sex to get what she wants, and while she usually flies solo in her schemes, she knows how to play Lupin like a harp when she needs his help. Or steal what he's already stolen.



INSPECTOR ZENIGATA The gang is perpetually chased by poor Inspector Zenigata, bloodhounding for Interpol. Zenigata's modus is his [illegible] to bring Lupin to justice. Actually, he's generally pretty mistaken [illegible] his straight-talking. While he can [illegible] like Inspector Clouseau of *Pink Panther* fame, Zenigata is [illegible] greatly talented; he's a descendent of a famous [illegible] detective. ■ Tom Mac

So where exactly does *Lupin* fit in? Well, *Lupin* launched Miyazaki's career. He got his start in TV animation, and co-directed 17 episodes of the first *Lupin III* TV series in 1971, and two more episodes post-*Cagliostro* in Lupin III's second TV series in 1980. It was *Cagliostro*'s incredible popularity and acclaim that allowed him to start Ghibli, his own anime studio, where he's been churning out more anime hits ever since.

LUPIN'S GANG STOLE THE HEART OF JAPAN!

Lupin and his motley crue of theives (see sidebar) have enraptured Japanese audiences for nearly 35 years. As proof of Lupin's enduring popularity, FUNimation president Gen Fukunaga points to a recent "Anime Best 100" poll conducted by Japanese TV channel Animax in a partnership with men's magazine *Brutus* and the video rental chain Tsutaya. Not only did *Lupin III* come in second place for "Best All-Time Anime" (right behind *Gundam*), the master thief also nabbed second place in the "Most Popular Character Ever" poll, behind only Doraemon, the robotic cat—practically the Mickey Mouse of Japan. Not too shabby, considering Lupin beat out *Gundam*'s Amuro Ray, *Dragon Ball Z*'s Goku and Sailor Moon.

Why is Lupin so incredibly popular in Japan? Because of the characters, man! Every Lupin movie and manga has the same cast of five enduring characters—four master criminals and the determined (and eternally thwarted) cop who's sworn to bring them down.



IT'S A STEAL There is nothing you possess that Lupin cannot take away, like the Twilight Gemini.

THINK GUNDAM IS HUGE? FORGET IT—LUPIN'S *BIGGER*!

Lupin's done more than just challenge *Gundam* for Japan's popularity, it's beaten *Gundam* in quantity! Think the decades-spanning tapestry of *Gundam* anime is overwhelming? Well, you ain't seen nothing yet. Since 1969, Lupin has appeared in three TV shows, for 228 episodes. As you Gundam freaks are well aware, that incredible figure is still less than the total number of *Gundam* episodes—however, there have been eight theatrically released Lupin films and 13 TV movies as well, an amount that easily puts *Gundam* to shame.

And the Lupin franchise is still going strong. "It's still extremely popular in Japan," Fukunaga says. "They continue to make new movies every single year. Recent movie airings have done over a 20 rating, which are Super Bowl-type numbers!"

In fact, something Lupin—whether it's been manga, a television series, or a theatrical or TV movie—has been produced almost continuously since the first manga was created back in 1967.

LUPIN RIVALS POKÉMON FOR GOODIES!

All the shows and movies are hardly the tip of the iceberg—there's more Lupin merchandise out there than any one person can ever hope to accumulate, even if you did get every single Pokémon pocket protector!

If you've got anime-lovin' friends, chances are they've already got some Lupin luxuries, since it's been a big hit with U.S. anime fans for years. "We try to stock whatever Lupin merchandise we can," says Peter Kato, assistant manager at New York City's Toy Tokyo store. "It really is popular. It does well not just with Japanese customers, but with Western customers, too."

A colossal amount of toys have come out over the years, including action figures in every scale, from 12-inch dolls in cloth costumes to 3 3/4-inch Star Wars-sized figures.

Dozens of *Lupin* soundtrack CDs have been issued; just when you think you have 'em all, a new one pops up. The *Lupin* theme has been remixed just about every way imaginable, including some awfully trippy dance tracks.

Just about every video game platform ever made—from Nintendo to Sega to Sony—has a *Lupin III* game of some sort available for it. Heck, we've counted more than 20 so far.

There's tons of Lupin stuff on ebay.com, and you'd be hard-pressed to find an anime store worth a damn that doesn't carry some Lupin stuff. Toys, wall scrolls, soundtracks—

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS LUPIN?

A GEOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO GRAND LARCENY



Lupin's a worldwide force of criminal nature, baby. Here's just a handful of the places this globetrotting thief has made a huge splash.

1. New York The Statue of Liberty is missing! Within the statue is a diamond, and if a group of Satanists get it, they'll start a World War! C'mon, Lupin, we'd kinda like that statue back... (*Bye Bye Liberty Crisis*)

2. Russia Rasputin lives! But it made no difference to Lupin, who thwarted the ancient ruler in a bid for the lost treasure of the Romanov dynasty. (*From Russia With Love*)

3. North Atlantic Even the wreck of the Titanic isn't safe from Lupin, as he chases a statue called the "Dragon of Titanic" that sunk aboard the vessel. (*Dragon of Doom*)

4. Morocco A legendary diamond called the Twilight holds the key to helping a persecuted people called the Celts rise up against their oppressors. Fortune and nation building—that's two birds with one stone, Lupin! This is the first Lupin movie FUNimation plans to release. (*Twilight Gemini*)

5. Tokyo The treasure of the Tokugawa Shogunate is the target of our enterprising thief, and if he destroys an entire theme park in the process, them's the breaks! (*Flaming Memory: Tokyo Crisis*)

6. Cagliostro The world's smallest country gets its royal wedding interrupted—and its leader, uh, deposed—thanks to Lupin's interference. This flick is currently out on DVD from Manga Entertainment. (*The Castle of Cagliotro*)

7. France A grand prix is the site of Lupin's quest to regain a treasured family possession: Napoleon's dictionary! Wait...what the hell? (*Napoleon's Dictionary*)

8. Egypt What does Lupin do with the "Philosopher's Stone," one of Egypt's great national treasures? Gives it to Fujiko in exchange for a date. Oh, Lupin... (*Mystery of Mamo*)

9. Ancient Babylon Lupin seeks the legendary Gold of Babylon, and crosses swords here with the New York Mafia. Wow, the Sopranos are branching out... (*The Gold of Babylon*)

10. Zufu In the fascist island country of Zufu, Lupin seeks the treasure of the deposed ruler. Is the secret to getting it his young, beautiful daughter? What do you think? (*Dead or Alive*) ■ TR

you name it—are yours for the taking at conventions and most online stores.

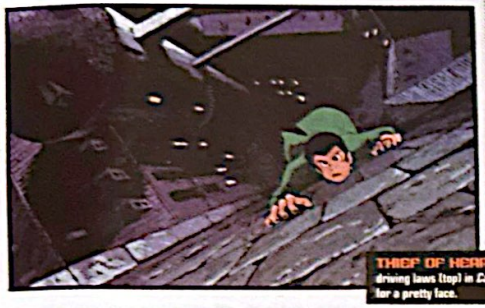
THE GUYS BEHIND *DRAGON BALL Z* KNOW IT'LL BE A HIT

How certain is FUNimation—the company that made *Dragon Ball Z* a blast in America—of Lupin's success? So certain that the company snapped up every Lupin movie Japan's NTV was willing to license it. "The characters are really endearing," says Fukunaga. "They're just fun to watch. Lupin is clearly one of the top brands that has done well for quite some time. It seemed like an obvious choice."

The Lupin invasion will begin in April, when *Twilight Gemini* hits stores. *Twilight Gemini* takes Lupin and his gang to Morocco, after a dying thief gives Lupin half a diamond, which he says will unlock a mysterious treasure of a people called the Gelfs. Of course, the police are hot on Lupin's trail, he gets caught between the Moroccan army and Gelf separatists, and a beautiful girl hides the other half of the diamond. It's all topped off with a few brilliant nods to *Casablanca*.

The other movies due to be released are *Voyage to Danger*, *Dragon of Doom*, *Pursuit of Hanimao's Treasures*, *Farewell to Nostradamus*, *Dead or Alive*, *Crisis in Tokyo*, *The Columbus Files*, *Missed by a Dollar* and the much-lauded *Island of Assassins*. After *Twilight Gemini*, they'll be released every five or six months. FUNimation is definitely dubbing them for American release but is unsure about other details. But if the company follows its very successful *DBZ* DVD formula, it'll release cut and uncut versions of each title—the uncut will most likely contain the original Japanese language track.





THIEF OF HEARTS Jigen and Lupin enjoy Europe's last driving laws (top) in *Cagliostro*; below, Lupin will do anything for a pretty face.

MORE APPEALING ACTION AND INTRIGUE THAN *JAMES BOND*?

Lupin even out-Bonds James Bond himself when it comes to action, intrigue and all-around coolness. Bond might have the better luck with the ladies, but Lupin's flicks range from Tokyo to Paris to Ancient Babylon, with bad guys always chasing after him even more so than the police. Not to mention Lupin's gadgets: from hover-cars to belt-buckle grappling hooks to stuff we can't even describe because it's too crazy for words (that pyramid-infiltrating construction from *Mystery of Mamo* comes to mind).

The reason for *Lupin*'s incredible popularity in Japan is because it covers so many genres. While many of the *Lupin* stories are good, old-fashioned heist films, the series has been known to swerve into the realms of science fiction, fantasy and, believe it or not, theology. *Lupin* installments like *Walther P-38* can be intensely gritty and violent, while *Bye Bye Liberty* verges on hysterical.

Add up all the action, intrigue, adventure and hilarity, and you've got an anime series unlike any other. Lupin's been on our Most Wanted list for years. He should be on yours too.

Come this April, we'll all be able to nab him.

Michigan-based writer Tom Root stole a kitten once, then raised it with love. He's a thief with a heart of gold.

FORGET IT, HE'S FRENCH

AI UNCOVERS LUPIN'S CENTURY-OLD SECRET



Lupin has the craziest origin of any anime character that we've ever heard of, and it hides a secret worth keeping: One of our favorite anime characters is actually French. Sigh.

Back in the early 1900s, French author Maurice Leblanc started churning out tales called *Arsène Lupin: Gentleman Thief*. Making their way to Japan, Leblanc's stories inspired manga artist Monkey Punch, who debuted his own Lupin in comic form in 1967. Monkey Punch made his Lupin, Lupin III, the Japanese grandson of the original French Arsène Lupin.

The trouble with all this? Monkey Punch never bothered to, y'know, ask Leblanc's estate for permission. In Japan, where copyrights aren't always enforced to their fullest (and sometimes just not ignored altogether), it wasn't that big a deal. But once Lupin started popping up in the United States, it became a very big deal. Far from being some ancient uncopyrighted property, the French version of Lupin remains viable. He's appeared in movies of his own, the first way back in 1917 and the most recent in [illegible], he's even landed his own French TV series as recently as 1989.

American-[illegible] in the early 1990s changed the title character to "Rupan" (an alternate Japanese [illegible]) or simply "The Wolf" (the [illegible] equivalent of the French word "loup") to avoid all [illegible].

So, [illegible]'s a little French. Just [illegible] not to think about it too hard. That's what we do. TR

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DARK SIDE of the MOON

50 'Sailor Moon' secrets American TV producers didn't want you to know!

By Jennifer McConti

Sailor Moon's a goody-goody...right?

Well, that's only because fans who've watched *Sailor Moon* on American TV never got the whole picture! Nudity, excessive violence and raunchy humor might be acceptable for Japanese audiences of all ages, but all that juicy stuff got snipped out over here.

So what exactly have we missed? Apparently, quite a lot! But don't worry; we'll fill you in. Just note that all episode numbers listed below refer to the Japanese episodes. Now, go grab some potato chips (octopus-flavored, for you otaku) and find out!

1. PLEASED TO MEETCHA! In the English version of *Sailor Moon*, the opening theme song was changed and catchy lyrics were added. Jupiter and Venus weren't even seen in the opening titles until episode #27 in Japan.

2. FACT OR FICTION? Originally, Sailor V was a real person—kids chatter about Sailor V catching crooks and stopping crime sprees. In the U.S. version, however, Sailor V is just a video game and TV character.

3. YOUTH GONE WILD In episode #2, Melvin is hypnotized and does all sorts of kooky stuff. While enthralled, Melvin insults his schoolteacher, lifts up her dress, attacks Serena and tries to kiss her.

4. HIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT Episode #5 (never translated) features some good, old-fashioned brawlin! Serena's brother Sammy kicks Luna, Serena beats up Sammy, Luna attacks a cute fuzzy animal...sheesh, there's more action here than in that *DBZ*!

5. ACT YOUR AGE! Serena uses her disguise power in episode #6 to change into an adult. Then she wears a very [illegible] outfit in a bar, and gets into a strange man's car.

6. DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL! In episode #20, the girls [illegible] on their own to a secluded hotel without an adult chaperone. Here in the U.S., that's called a "prom."

7. LOVE LOST In episode #42, Sailor Venus falls in love with an adult man in London. Seems that's fit for *Dawson's Creek*, but not an American cartoon...

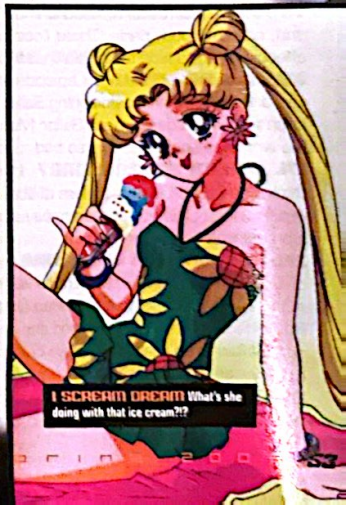
8. BERYL OF LAUGHS There's a page in this issue of *Anime Invasion* devoted to the changes made in the climactic Scouts vs. Queen Beryl battle—check it out on page 34!

9. BEACH BLANKET BIMBOS Almost every episode that features the girls in bathing suits has been cut from North American broadcast, like episode #67, which features the girls on an isolated island. Sorry, Gilligan.

10. WORTH THE WEIGHT In episode #4, Serena's worried she's fat, so she goes on a dangerous diet: skipping meals, working out too much, etc. In the U.S. version, it's explained that she forgot her lunch, not that she's skipping any meals.

11. BUBBLES... Also in episode #4, Serena's in a hot tub where she sports a heckuva lot of cleavage. However, when the episode was edited for the U.S. audience, the cleavage was colored over as foamy water. Damn bubbles.

12. USER AND ABUSER In episode #8, a scene is cut where Serena imagines her mother strangling her for getting another bad grade. Same goes for a voiceover of Serena plotting to be friends with Amy so that Amy can do her homework.



13. DIRTY OLD MAN Raye's grandfather makes some suggestive faces in episode #10 and even offers to give the girls a "tour of the temple." Hoo boy.

14. DIRTY OLD MAN, PART 2 In episode #16, Raye's grandfather asks Amy if she wants to get married at the temple, but she replies that she has no groom. So Grandpa offers to make an honest woman outta her. Yuck.

15. X-RATED Nephrite uses an x-ray crystal in episode #24 to search the sleeping Molly's room. Nephrite looks through the sheets...and pajamas...to see what she's hiding.

16. CAT SCRATCH FEVER In episode #52, Mina calls her cat Artemis a pervert because he's looking at her while she's changing her clothes.

17. FEEL THE BURN! Grandpa complains there're no girls at the shrine anymore in episode #53. In the U.S. episode, Grandpa talks about opening up an aerobics martial arts class instead.

18. GENDER BENDER All four of the generals of the Negaforce are men in the original Japanese anime. However U.S. (and Spanish) censors didn't like the homosexual relationship between Zoycite and Malachite, so Zoycite was changed to a female.


CRAZY KITTY What's she doing with that cat?!? What a horrible, horrible lady!

19. GENDER BENDER, PART 2 In *Sailor Moon S*, Amara (Uranus) fools the girls into thinking she's a boy. Both Lita and Serena develop a crush on Amara before she reveals her true gender.

20. PANTY RAIDERS In episode #7, two girls are telling jokes on a stage about going into an American store and asking for a skillet and some tea. Thanks to their rotten English, they get panties instead.

21. STUFF A SOCK IN IT As Serena opens a drawer in episode #19 to get ready for a party, she says, "I'll wear clean underwear." In the U.S. version, however, she states, "I'll wear my coolest socks." The words were changed, but the drawer is still full of panties.

22. MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE In the Japanese version, the Scouts' transformations show lines indicating breasts and, er, other body parts. Those lines were erased and special effects added to hide their nakedness.

23. SAILOR LUSH? In episode #21, Zoycite makes a remark about Nephrite poisoning Sailor Moon's lemonade. But it isn't a lemonade jug near Sailor Moon; it's a brandy snifter. No wonder her grades are so bad...

24. SAILOR BOOZEHOUND? In episode #22, Serena, thinking it's punch, drinks a glass of booze. While the scene was cut from the U.S. episode, her rosy cheeks and goofy expression weren't tampered with.

25. FRANKLY, MY DEAR LUNA... For some reason tons of *Gone With the Wind* references were excised from episode #31. The cat chasing Luna is Red Battler (Rhett Butler), the little girl's last name is O'Hara and she has a Scarlet O'Hara hairstyle. After Chad rides off, Raye comments about him leaving quickly...as if he'd gone with the wind."

26. WHAT'S SHE SAY? Zoycite impersonates Sailor Moon and pretends to be trapped. When Sailor Moon arrives, she comments: "That's a bad hobby to tie up girls like that!" In America she says: "I'm the original champion of justice. Let that girl go!"

27. HIT ME BABY ONE MORE TIME In episode #35, Mars slaps a whiny Serena across the face to snap her out of her mood. The slap was cut from the guts of the U.S. episode, but left in the preview of the show's opener.

28. BY THIS TIME, MY LUNGS WERE... One of the Cardigans is strangling Sailor Moon in episode #57, but the Moonlight Knight rescues her. In the edited version he gets to Sailor Moon even before the demon gets its hands around her neck.

29. CALL SOCIAL SERVICES! In episode #73, Serena gets mad at Rini, and Darien grabs her hand to stop her from striking the child. Then he hands Serena his belt and says, "Do it proper." No, no, just kidding about that last part.

30. PUPPY LOVE One of the side stories throughout *Sailor Moon* is the crush Artemis had on Luna. Almost all flirting between the two cats is cut from the imported version.

31. JUST CHARMING Whenever Raye prays for answers in front of her temple's fire, a foreboding armored figure usually appears in the flames. That image was cut out of all the U.S. episodes except two.

32. CRYSTAL POWER When Sailor Moon goes for her Silver Empenium Crystal to defend herself against the Negaforce and finds it missing, Mars says she took it so the dark forces couldn't get it. In the Japanese version, Serena was afraid she couldn't keep it safe, so she gave it to Mars.

33. THE WATER GIRL In episode #47, Serena is late to school and forced to stand outside the classroom holding a bucket full of water. A nervous Serena ends up spilling the bucket all over her teacher.

34. URINE DEEP TROUBLE After Ann goes running from Darien's apartment in episode #53, Darien explains to Serena that the baby he's sitting for threw up all over Ann. But in the Japanese version, the baby sensed that Ann was evil and...peed on her.

35. WANG CHUNG Also in episode #53, Serena believes the baby is a girl and screams when she changes his diaper.



BUCKET O' PUNISHMENT Oh sweet Lord, what's she doing with that bucket?!? (Do these captions even *mean* anything?)

When Darien investigates, Serena cries, "The girl has a penis!" Man, you can't even say that on *Friends*!

36. CUP CHECK The Sacred Cup in *Sailor Moon S* was translated over as the "Purity Force" and then later the "Purity Chalice." Maybe American censors were afraid a Psychic Jock Strap would soon follow.

37. ANOTHER BED-WETTING LIBERAL... Rini sleeps in Serena's bed in episode #68, making Serena mad because she has to share. In the Japanese episode, Rini's sleeping there because she wet her bed.

38. URINE HUMOR, TAKE 85 Also in episode #68, Serena airs out Rini's portable bed and gets teased by Sammy that Serena's getting extra chores for being mean to their guest. In Japanese, Sammy teases that Serena wet her own bed.

39. IS THIS A BUST? In episode #56, the director tells Lita she should star in the play because she has the biggest breasts—not "the most talent" as U.S. audiences were led to believe.

40. EVERY PARENT'S NIGHTMARE Serena's dad isn't pleased she's dating the college-aged Darien. In the U.S. version, Mom tells Serena to invite him over for dinner, but originally, Mom tells Serena to invite him over when Dad's away on business.

41. HEARTBROKEN When the evil in Sailor Moon S was translated to America, it became known as "Heart Snatchers," "Heart Thieves," "Demons" and countless other things. Sheesh, can't Americans just pick a name and stick with it?

42. TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT In episode #64, the girls get trapped in an anti-gravity chamber. As they float toward the ceiling, Raye ends up underneath Mina's skirt. That's left in the U.S. version, but the line where Mina calls Raye a pervert isn't.

43. FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES A lot of Rini's lines get changed over the course of the series. In episode #65, instead of saying she wants to marry Darien, Rini says that Darien and Serena were fighting and have broken up.

44. THE 10TH PLANET? The four sisters identify themselves as coming from the 10th planet, the Dark Moon. In the U.S. version, they don't say they're from a 10th planet. Schoolgirls with magic powers are fine, but a 10th planet is absurd.

45. I'M TOO SEXY... When Emerald first appears (episode #73), there's a long shot of her that pans up her body to her face while swing music plays in the background. The U.S. version skips the leering camera angles.


OH, BABY! What's that baby doing to Darien?!?

SMALL WONDER!

They're tiny, they're toony, they're li'l Sailor Mooney...?



"Chibi" means "little" or "small" in Japanese, and cute "chibi" versions of popular anime or manga characters have been a mainstay of the art form for a long time.

Another term for chibi is "super-deformed," since the art style is just that—shrunk-down, squat little versions of characters. Chibis are shorter with large heads and cartoony expressions. They're easier to draw than regular versions and are also a lot of fun for expressing an extreme emotion: joy, misery or just plain shock. In Japanese, Sailor Moon's daughter Rini is known as "Sailor Chibi Moon," since she's really just a cute, smaller version of Mom!

Some of the most popular characters to make chibis out of are the Sailor Scouts and Sailor Moon. Web sites are filled with those champions of love and justice, striking poses and looking adorable. ■ JC

46. WHAT'S IN A NAME? The Scouts' battle cries were inconsistent in the American version of *Sailor Moon S*. "Sparkling Wide Pressure" was usually identified correctly, but there were occasions that it was called "Jupiter Thunder Power" and "Supreme Thunder Crash."

47. WHAT'S IN A NAME, PART 2 Venus' "Love-Me Chain" also got many names when it got imported to the U.S., fluctuating from "Venus Love Chain Encircle" to "Venus Love Chain Whip" to "Venus Love Chain Harness" and sometimes simply "Venus Love Chain."

48. WHAT'S IN A NAME, PART 3 Chalk another one up to indecisive Americans. Uranus, Neptune and Pluto's transformations constantly changed from "Star Power" to "Planet Power," and their attacks would sometimes have their planet name in front of it and sometimes not.

49. CROSSING THE LINE In episode #74, all the scenes with the Sailor Scouts imprisoned on crystal crucifixes are removed from the U.S. translation. What, that's a touchy subject or something?

50. KISSING COUSINS In the Japanese version, Neptune and Uranus are not cousins but lovers. Big difference.

Freelance writer Jennifer Contino thinks To Kill a Mockingbird would have been a heiluva lot better if "Scout" had the "World Shaking" attack...

54 ■ ■ ■

BY HELEN MCCARTHY

REANIMETED

CLASSIC ANIME FROM DAYS OF YORE:

URUSEI YATSURA

Plenty of otaku know about *Ranma 1/2* and *Inu-Yasha*, and their combination of action and hilarity. Otaku even know about their creator, Rumiko Takahashi, and how she's the number-one female comic artist in the world.

But you may not know that it's all thanks to *Urusei Yatsura*.

Urusei Yatsura (roughly translated as "Those Obnoxious Aliens") is one of the foundation stones of the entire modern anime genre. The tale of boy-meets-girl has never been so arduous, or hilarious.



The boy in this case is Ataru Moroboshi, the most lecherous teenager in the world. He's also the unluckiest, as evidenced when he gets randomly selected as Earth's champion to save the world from alien invasion by the Oni, a horned, green-haired race with a penchant for tiger stripes.

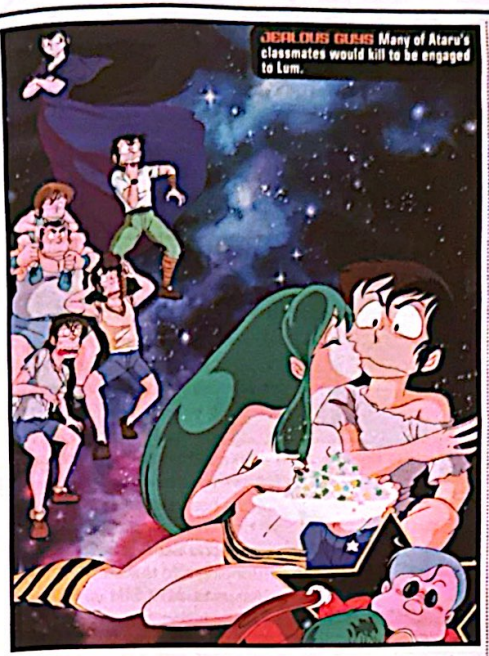
To show their sense of fair play, they offer to call off their fleet if Ataru can defeat their champion, Princess Lum, in a game of tag. Luckily, Ataru's talent for perversion wins the day: he distracts Lum by snatching off her bikini top and grabs her horns to win the game. When, in victory, he proposes marriage to his sweetheart Shinobu, Lum—and the horde of reporters nearby—thinks the proposal is meant for her, and Lum immediately moves in.

And Ataru's hell begins. Lum tolerates none of Ataru's mania to meet chicks, and enforces it ruthlessly with her electric shocks. On Earth, Lum immediately acquires a legion of drooling male followers determined to get Ataru out of the picture, and Ataru tries to hit on every female alien in the galaxy. In addition, Lum's visiting alien family and friends help to liven up (and extensively damage) Tokyo to no end. Ataru's misfortune invites the most eclectic cast of characters storming through his house, determined to do him in, or—in the case of the beautiful alien women that he chases after—make Lum do him in herself.

With a theme song that urges people to "make it weird," *UY* boasts anime's funniest and most bizarre stories. Alien invaders come by so often, no one is fazed by it by the end of the first season. Watermelon gods with eternal curses, figures from Japanese myth that refuse to wear pants, alien diseases that turn boys' eyes into overly-cute-manga-style girls' eyes—all par for the course for Ataru and crew.

The series' popularity is mostly due to Rumiko Takahashi's incredible fusion of romantic comedy, science fiction and Japanese folklore. The alien Oni are a sci-fi version of the Japanese devils of legend, the Oni, down to their tiger-stripes. Most Japanese myths make it into *Urusei Yatsura* in some form or another, but usually with some wacky, modern-day twist. Another reason the series became so popular in Japan is because, beneath all the madness, it's an amazing glimpse of real suburban life in Japan. Ataru and his family are as incredibly typical and normal as possible—it's just everything that happens to them that's insane.

ON YOU! The deceptively cute Lum at rest and, above, in her eternal pursuit of Ataru.



JEALOUS GUYS Many of Ataru's classmates would kill to be engaged to Lum.

UY started its run on Japanese television in 1981 and became incredibly popular in Japan, running for five years. Twenty-five volumes of TV episodes have been released in the U.S. by AnimEigo—a little more than half of the show's run—and are currently being reissued on DVD.

The series spawned several theatrical movies, as well; the first two, *Only You* and *Beautiful Dreamer*, are considered masterpieces of surreal romantic comedy and were directed by Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*). Animeigo offers six tapes of OVAs and all of the movies—except *Beautiful Dreamer*, which is available from Central Park Media. The manga, which Takahashi drew until 1987, has been brought out partially by Viz Comics. They and the graphic novel collections can usually be found in most comic stores.

So why should you watch *Urusei Yatsura*? Because it's the first, freshest and funniest work by one of the manga and anime industry's top talents—a woman who is now the highest-selling female comic artist in the world. Because, with its huge cast of characters, stories and comedy, it's like the *Simpsons* of Japan. Because of all you can learn about Japanese culture and history from it. Because it's probably the most unwilling love story ever conceived.

And because Lum will shock you if you don't.

UK-based Helen McCarthy is co-author of The Anime Encyclopedia *and can tell good from evil on sight.*

ROLE CALL

THE KEY PLAYERS IN UY'S CRAZY WORLD



ATARU MOROBOSHI is the most lecherous, unluckiest boy in the universe. His main ambition in life is to get his hands on as many beautiful chicks as possible. That's pretty much him to a tee.



LUM is Princess of the Oni, a green-haired babe with cute little horns whose habitual dress is a tigerskin bikini and matching boots. Despite the fact that Ataru is the worst husband in the world, she refuses to give up on him—or let him get away.



SHINOBU, Ataru's long-suffering girlfriend, is the typical Japanese girl-next-door. Unfortunately, Ataru's behavior often sends her into fits of jealous rage, in which she can effortlessly hurl desks at Ataru. Eventually, she stops caring.



CHERRY is a Buddhist monk who constantly interferes in Ataru's life. He constantly predicts doom and misfortune for the teenager, even if he has to ensure that it happens himself. Although sworn to moderation, his gluttony (for food, at least) even exceeds Ataru's.



TEN is Lum's baby cousin, who came to Earth to visit Lum and stuck around to make Ataru's life miserable with his fire-breathing. Although a toddler, he unashamedly uses his cuteness to be held to the chests of attractive women. ■ HM

RUMIKO WHO?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MS. TAKAHASHI



While studying at Japan Women's University in Tokyo in the 1970s, Rumiko Takahashi signed up for Kazuo (*Lone Wolf and Cub*) Koike's manga school in her spare time. For two hours every weekday evening, Takahashi turned out pages of comics and developed her own approach to character-driven comedy.

In 1978, she won the New Artists' Award from publisher Shogakukan and *Urusei Yatsura* began publication in the prestigious weekly magazine *Shonen Sunday*. It wasn't an overnight sensation—even when the *UY* cartoon started its TV run in 1981, Takahashi was still working another job full-time and sleeping in the closet of her tiny one-room apartment. By the show's end, Takahashi was one of the most celebrated manga artists in the country. *UY*'s success allowed her to focus entirely on writing and drawing her own works, and over the last two decades she has continued to produce popular comics. In addition to *Rumic World* and *One Pound Gospel*, Takahashi's other series include *Maison Ikkoku*, which focuses on life and romance in an apartment house in '80s Tokyo, and *Ranma 1/2*, a martial-arts comedy that mirrors *UY*'s unwilling romance and has been possibly her greatest success in the West.

Harry Potter's J.K. Rowling is considered successful for selling over 100 million copies of her work worldwide, but Takahashi has surpassed that total in Japan alone, becoming one of the nation's richest authors. Her latest series, *Inu-Yasha*, is a hit on both sides of the Pacific, in addition to being one of the most popular cartoons in Japan today. ■ HM

ROBOTECH ORIGINS

ORIGINAL JAPANESE *SOUTHERN CROSS* AND *NEW GENERATION* COMING TO DVD

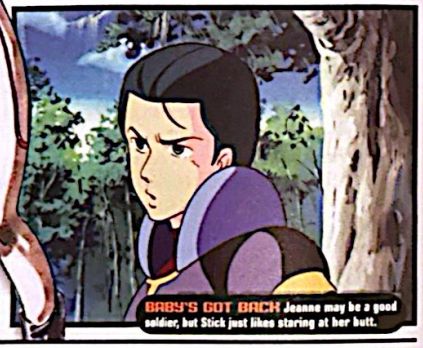
Robotech fans, hold onto your protoculture: the original, unedited versions of *Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* and *Genesis Climber Mospeada* are on their way to America for the first time ever.

Originally broadcast in Japan in 1983-84, these shows were two of the three separate anime TV shows that Harmony Gold fused together back in 1985 to create the *Robotech* saga (the second and third chapters, known as "Southern Cross" and "New Generation," respectively). While *Robotech* has been available through VHS and DVD, the original *Southern Cross* and *Mospeada* series have never been seen by American audiences. Now, courtesy of ADV Films, the makers of the recent best-selling *Robotech* DVDs, fans will finally get to see what they missed, including cut footage, the original Japanese dialogue—and the series' original plots!

Animeigo recently released the original *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* series—the show used as the first part of *Robotech*, "Macross"—as a 9-DVD boxed set, and it's already been a huge seller. Animeigo spent hundreds of thousands of dollars digitally re-transferring the video from film, removing film flaws; you can visit macross.animeigo.com to see some "before-and-after" shots of the process.

Before they were forged together to become *Robotech* in America, each show was totally independent of each other. *Macross* follows the events after 1999, when an alien spacecraft lands on Earth, halting a World War as the nations of Earth unite to combat the alien threat. *Southern Cross* follows the adventures of hot-headed Jeanne Francais and the 15th Squadron of the Southern Cross army as they try to save their colony world from extinction. In *Mospeada*, young pilot Stick Bernard sets out on a suicide mission and gathers a band of rebels to invade the headquarters of their alien oppressors, to wrest their homeworld back from the Invid.

"Bringing it to the States is a big honor for us at ADV, and we're especially happy to be releasing it in the Japanese language, which is the way it was intended to be seen," says ADV President John Ledford. ADV plans to have both series out in stores later this year. ■ Rob Bricken and Chip Carter



BABY'S GOT BACK Jeanne may be a good soldier, but Stick just likes staring at her butt.

TRAILERS

BITE-SIZED NEWS FOR QUICK DIGESTION

ESCAFLOWNE EXTRAS!

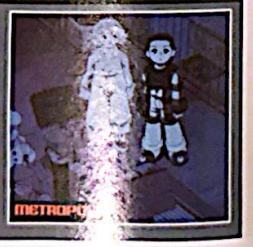
Great news from Bandai for *'Flowne* fans! This year should see a collector's edition DVD box of all eight volumes of the *Escaflowne* TV series, plus regular and special editions of the movie. The special edition should come with [illegible] and DTS sound, a theatrical preview before it [illegible] production art, a [illegible] DVD, soundtrack CD and more.

OSCAR SPEECH II

Oscar-nominated actress Juliette Lewis makes her anime debut as humanoid robot Hazuki Armitage in *Armitage: Dual Matrix*, the sequel to Pioneer's *Armitage III*. The film is in post-production and will be out in June; it may have a theatrical preview before it hits DVD.

CITY HUNTERS

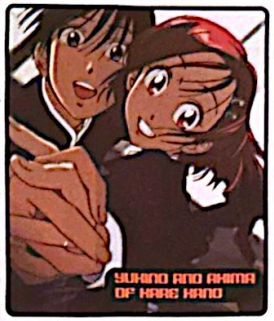
Fans of the recent movie of Osamu Tezuka's *Metropolis*, start your imports—the Japan-only *Metropolis* Memorial Box will include a second DVD with bonus footage, trailers, a 1997 feature, liner notes and a 120-page booklet and collection of original storyboard drawings by director Rintaro! ■ CC



FROM THE ASHES

THE RISES AND FALLS OF GAINAX STUDIOS

Everybody loves a comeback story, and Gainax Studios, the animators behind *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, have provided several in the studio's 20-year history.



YUKINO AND AKIMA OF KARE KANO

After running amateur sci-fi conventions in '70s Japan, several core committee members managed to produce their own animation sequences, which drew enough acclaim for anime giant Bandai to greenlight a full-length film, *Wings of Honneamaise*.

The film was a box-office failure but became a cult classic. Gainax followed up with critical hits *Gunbuster*, *Nadia: Secret of Blue Water* and the self-parodying *Otaku no Video* in 1991 (about a rookie animation company run by *otakus*), although by this point they had lost popularity and were in financial trouble.

In 1995, Gainax made their comeback with *Evangelion*, which took Japan by storm, spawning a huge following, even though the last episodes of the show were criticized for their low-budget feel. Gainax attempted to right things with *Evangelion* movies, intended to replace the last episodes of the TV series, but the movies drew mixed reviews. Then tax troubles beset Gainax, and members of the core group drifted in and out.

Gainax's next two projects, *Kare Kano* (translated as "His or Her Circumstances") and *FLCL* (a.k.a. *Fooly Cooly*) were quite popular but failed to capture the same huge attention as *Evangelion*.



HERO OF FLCL (FOOLY COOLY)

However, they're all great anime—Right Stuf plans to bring *Kare Kano* out this spring, and Synch-Point will produce the first *FLCL* DVD volume in March. Meanwhile, the *Evangelion* movie DVDs are on track for April from Manga Entertainment.

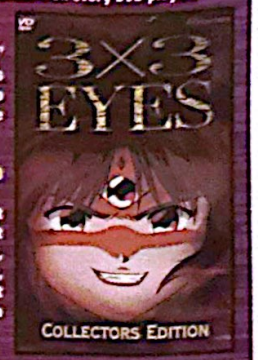
With help from their American fans and their stellar shows, Gainax is poised to rise yet again. ■ RB & CC

EASTERN EGGS

HIDDEN SECRETS OF YOUR FAVORITE ANIME DVDS

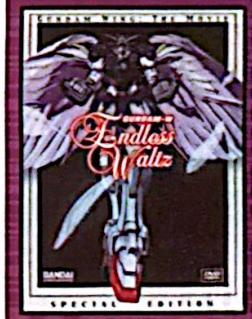
What could be better than ripping open the shrink-wrap of a brand-new DVD? Hidden features, that's what! (Be warned—not every access method will work on every DVD player.)

3 X 3 EYES
On Disc Two, select "Extras," "Actors," then Megumi's name; then press right to access a hidden image gallery.



CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND VOL. #1
Go to "Extras" and select "Character Profiles." Select Aya, and on her first page, highlight the right arrow, press up and highlight "FRIENDS". Select it for a bonus screen.

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS VOL. 3
Go to the track listing for the videos, and then to "Credits" and press "Enter." As the credits roll, hit "Enter" again to watch a video of the *Knight Saber* voice actresses singing together.



GUNDAM WING: ENDLESS WALTZ SPECIAL EDITION
By going to the "Extras" section, and clicking on "Credits," you can hear the full-length version of "White Reflection" while looking at the screen.

EL-HAZARD: THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD
Let the main menu play to the end of the music and restart. Press 5. Pictures of caves appear with a numbered keypad in the upper left. Press the digits in the keypad to get to the image.

IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR VOL. #1-4
While on the Main Menu, move the cursor to the right. When the cursor is placed over one of the moving targeted ships and a target lands on one, you will access one of four different video collages of animation and original artwork. ■ CC



Scanned with CamScanner

ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS SPRING?

MARCH RELEASES

ASTRO BOY VOL. 1-3

The Japanese boy wonder comes back to America! This collection of the never-before-seen '80s TV show should delight everyone! Originally slated for February, it's been pushed back. Check out the boy wonder who started it all! (Manga Entertainment; VHS, $19.95)

DEVADASY

Even in 2012, young men like Kay are still plagued by nothing but homework and girl trouble. When an unknown force besieges Earth with robotic war machines, Kay must find his perfect match to use the super-weapon Devadasy and protect the peace of mankind! (AnimeWorks: VHS, $19.95; DVD, $24.95)

DRAGON BALL: RED RIBBON SAGA

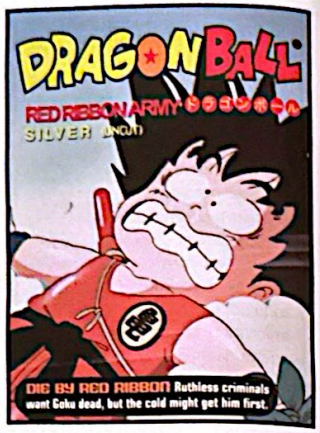
Two volumes continue young Goku's quest for the Dragon Balls in "Assault on Muscle Tower" and "White's Last Stand." Turns out the most evil, powerful crime organization in the world wants the Dragon Balls, too! (FUNimation; VHS, $12.95)

GHOST SWEEPER MIKAMI

Her name is Mikami and she's the sexiest exorcist/bounty hunter you will ever meet! When an evil vampire sorcerer returns to Tokyo after a 100-year absence, Mikami has to take him down before he takes over the city! (Manga Entertainment; VHS, $19.95; DVD, $29.95)

GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA VOL. 1

A foul-mouthed former motorcycle gang member plans to become the best high-school teacher in the world! An anime action-comedy based on the popular manga series, it's also one of the most-watched live-action dramas ever in Japan. (TokyoPop; VHS/DVD, $29.99)



GUNDAM 08TH MS TEAM: MILLER'S REPORT

This Gundam film compiles clips from the first 8 episodes as well as new footage of the exploits of rookie Federation pilot Shiro Amada and the soldiers of the 08th M.S. team. (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $429.98)

GUNDAM 0083: STARDUST MEMORY VOL. 2

A renegade Zeon pilot steals a powerful new Gundam prototype with nuclear capabilities, and only one pilot can catch him and recapture the Gundam before he rejoins his forces! (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

JIN-ROH: THE WOLF BRIGADE

The anime movie of the millennium—so far! A soldier questions himself in a Japan conquered by Nazi Germany! The Special Edition has a bonus DVD and a CD soundtrack. (Bandai Entertainment; Regular DVD, $29.98; Special Edition DVD, $59.98)

KNIGHT HUNTERS: LOST BOYS

A mysterious organization is kidnapping young girls and selling their organs on the black market. Also, Weiss and Aya's next big challenge waits in the wings—another group of assassins known only as "Schreient." (AnimeWorks; VHS, $24.95; DVD, $29.95)

MAETEL LEGEND

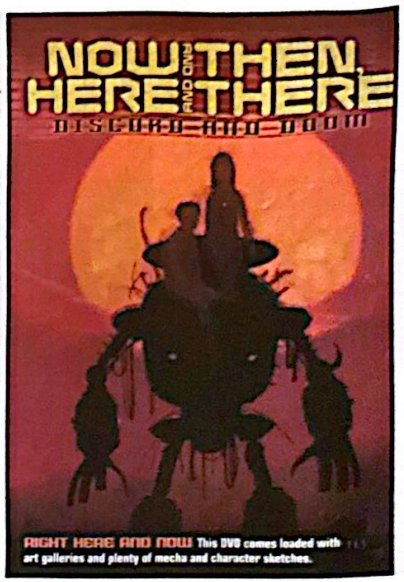
From Anime legen Leiji Matsumoto comes the prequel to his space opera *Galaxy Express 999*. Princess Maetel must choose between living forever or saving her people. (Central Park Media; VHS, $19.99; DVD, $29.99)

NADIA, SECRET OF BLUE WATER: NADIA'S ISLAND

Nadia and Jean have escaped Gargoyle's terrible wrath, but now they must survive nature itself. Will Jean win Nadia's heart? Or will their differences seal their doom? (ADV Films; VHS, $19.98; DVD, $29.98)

NOW AND THEN, HERE AND THERE

From the director of *Jubei-Chan the Ninja Girl*. Torn from her childhood home through a time warp, Sara escapes slavery into a desert full of drifters and freedom fighters. (Central Park Media; DVD, $29.99)



ORPHEN: MYSTERE

When a killer doll traps Orphen and his friends in the City of Canals, it's a fight to the finish. Then, he must return to the college of magic to search for the Book of Shadows! (ADV Films; VHS, $19.98; DVD, $29.98)

PRINCESS NINE: TRIPLE PLAY!

With just one position left to fill, the Princesses launch themselves into a grueling training schedule. Meanwhile, Keiko makes a second assault on the High School Baseball Association, only to be joined by an unexpected ally! (ADV Films; DVD, $19.98)

ROBOTECH: NEW GENERATION - GENESIS

As the valiant band of freedom fighters led by Scott Bernard makes its way to Reflex Point, they encounter evidence of a world they never knew. Allegiances are strained as the end is in sight. (ADV Films; DVD, $14.98)

ROBOTECH: NEW GENERATION - HOLLOW VICTORY

Scott Bernard and crew make their last attempt to destroy the Invid Queen and free Earth. The war will end, but at what price? The powerful conclusion to *Robotech*. (ADV Films; DVD, $14.98)

RUROUNI KENSHIN: SON OF GOD

Kenshin unravels the past of a rogue Hiten Mitsurugi master, and Kenshin is left to decide if a just war is truly impossible. (AnimeWorks; VHS, $24.95; DVD, $29.95)

SAILOR MOON: TIME TRAVELERS! AND LOVE CONQUERS ALL

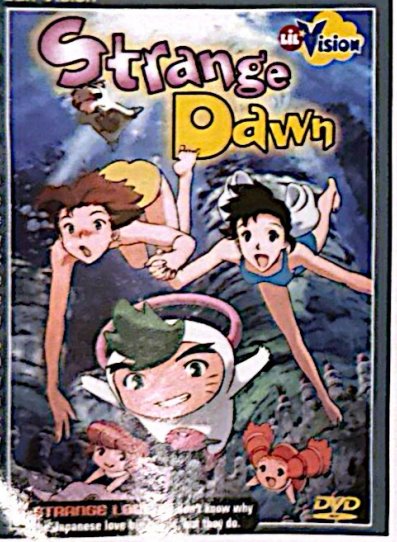
Double your pleasure! As the Neg

HOT PICK

STRANGE DAWN VOL. 2

April on DVD, $29.99; Urban Vision

Almost every Japanese character has a "super-deformed" likeness—you know, where the head gets real big and the body gets real little—but here's a whole series full of small-bodied, big-headed fun! Emi and Yuko, two ordinary high school girls, discover a world half their size...a world where two tiny nations are constantly at war and think the two girls are their legendary guardians! All Emi and Yuko want to do is go home, but which of the warring nations is telling the truth, and who can actually help them get home? In this volume, the Great Protectors set out on a quest to find a princess, but they get caught by the enemy Valgidan and have to face a difficult choice: whether to join the [illegible] army or doom their friends. This [illegible] comes [illegible] with Japanese and English dialogue tracks and a free gift as well!



HOT PICK

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA: THE MOVIE

March on DVD, $19.98; Pioneer Animation

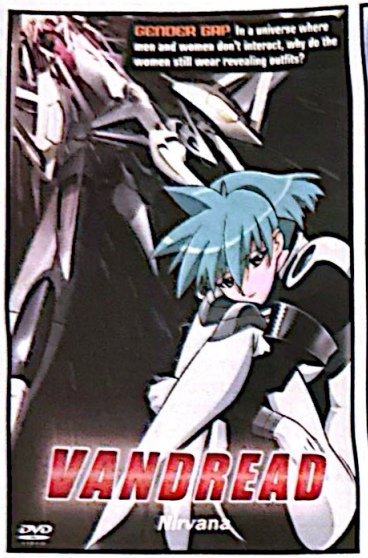
Finally, the world's cutest Cardcaptor gets her own flick! Based off CLAMP's hit manga and the TV series, the film was a hit when it was released in Japan in 1999. This full-length adventure starts when Cardcaptor Sakura finally captures the powerful Arrow card. After winning a trip to Hong Kong, Sakura, her big brother Toya, her best friend Tomoyo and her schoolmate Yukito enjoy their vacation until Sakura starts having strange dreams and weird premonitions—and what's more, a strange bird keeps following her! Who's trying to contact her? What do they want? One thing's for certain—there's someone or thing out to get her, and the clues lead back to an ancient enchanter Clow Reed, the sorcerer who invented the Clow Cards! Dubbed and appropriate for all ages.



amoon's attacks on the city continue, can the Sailor find there way through the dimensions of time and space and defeat the evil power of the Dark Crystal? (ADV Films; VHS, $12.98 each)

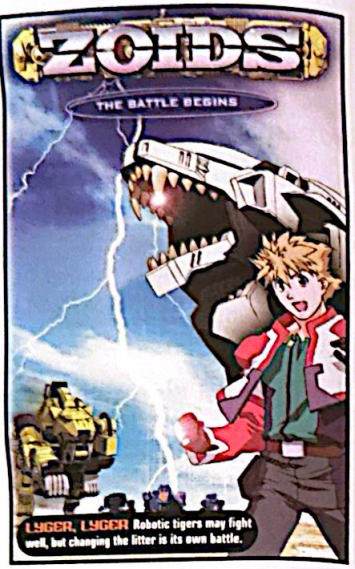
SOUL HUNTER: THE SPOILS OF WAR

This adaptation of an ancient Chinese legend continues to weave its terrifying, breath-taking and hilarious web as the forces of evil grow ever stronger and the forces of good just get crabbier. (ADV Films; DVD, $29.98)



VANDREAD VOL. 2: NIRVANA

The beautiful and curious Dita keeps the hapless Hibiki off balance, and the crew of the Nirvana deals with the possible loss of Meia as she fights to stay alive. (Pioneer Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)



ZOIDS VOL. 1

Animal machines with incredible powers battle for supremacy. Bit joins Team Blitz and learns to fight with his Zoid, Liger Zero. (Pioneer Entertainment; VHS, $14.98; DVD, $19.98)

HOT PICK

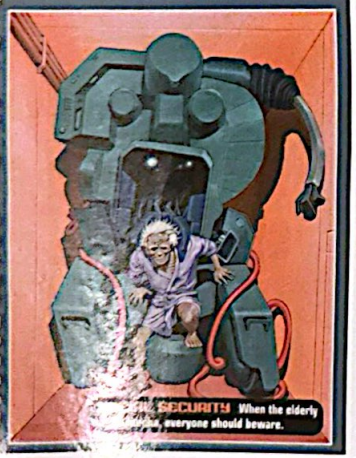
ROUJIN Z

April on DVD, $29.85; Central Park Media

You wouldn't figure the writer/artist of *Akira* to come up with an incisive, hilarious tale about taking care of the elderly through robotic technology, but he did, and the world is better for it.

As Japan tries to deal with the expense of its aging residents, young Haruko just tries to take care of old Mr. Takazawa—until the elderly man is chosen to be the guinea pig for a new type of full-service, artificially-intelligent, medical-unit bedthing that tends to his every need. Haruko worries that the machine is too cold and impersonal to truly care for a human, but little does she realize that the care-bed A.I. is the prototype for a military project!

Soon the A.I., in addition to catering to Mr. Takazawa's [illegible], decides to tend to his dog as well, and when the nearly [illegible] Takazawa wants to go to the [illegible], the weirdest chase scene in anime history ensues. Brilliant and incredibly funny.



APRIL RELEASES

A.D. POLICE: TO PROTECT AND SERVE BOX SET

The entire 12-episode series of this *Bubblegum Crisis* spin-off finds Officer Kenji Sasaki of the Genom City anti-robot crime division battling a mysterious rise in cyborg incidents—and a new by-the-book partner! (ADV Films; DVD, $34.98)

ADVENTURES OF THE MINI-GODDESS VOL. 2: THE BELLDANDY FILES

More celestial antics in bite-size form from the super-deformed *Ah! My Goddess* crew and their rat friends. Ten 8-minute episodes filled with wacky divine humor! (Pioneer Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

DRAGON BALL Z: MAJIN BOO - EMERGENCE

It's bad news for the Z gang—Goku's dead, Vegeta's dead and Gohan's dead too! Can anyone stop the pink monstrosity that is Boo? (FUNimation; VHS, $12.95)

GUNDAM 0080 VOL. 2

Volume Two finishes up the six-part miniseries as the survivor of the Cyclops Team squares off against a Zeon nuclear attack! (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

LOVE HINA VOL. 2

The second volume of the popular comedy follows Keitaro's adventures as manager of a girl's dorm while he struggles to get into college and not be killed by his tenants! (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

MEDABOTS: TRANSPORT METABEE!

Ten-year old Ikki has one wish: to show off his Medabilities. When Ikki stumbles across the key to every Medabot soul, the chance to become a part of this super-charged world of high-performance fighting robots suddenly becomes a reality. (ADV Films; DVD, $29.98)

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: DEATH AND REBIRTH

This compilation of the groundbreaking TV phenomenon finally arrives! It's cataclysmic Eva action as the fate of humanity rests on the shoulders of a 14-year old boy! (Manga Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

SABER MARIONETTE J-X VOL. 1

Faust is back, tinkering with Marionette technology. Will the Saber dolls help Faust or Otaru—or are they headed for the junkyard? The sequel to *Saber Marionette J.* (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $29.98)

SPRIGGAN

Yu Ominae is a Spriggan, an elite agent for the mysterious worldwide organization, ARCAM. When the fabled Noah's Ark is discovered, ARCAM is pitted against a rogue division of cyborg warriors working for the United States, who want to harness the Ark's fantastic powers in their quest for world domination. (ADV Films; DVD, $29.98)

TENCHI MUYO! THE TRUE PRINCE

On the run from the Galaxy Police, the Jurai military and just about everyone else in the universe, Tenchi makes his way closer to the final battle! (Pioneer Entertainment; VHS, $14.98)

MAY RELEASES

ASTRO BOY VOL. 4-6

When a professor adopts the robot boy at a circus, the boy becomes a hero! More never-before-seen color episodes of the anime title that started it all—*Astro Boy*! Only on VHS for now, but the DVDs will be released in 2003 (Astro Boy's "birthday")! (Manga Entertainment; VHS, $19.95)



GUNDAM: THE MOVIE BOX SET

Three Gundam movies, packed with mobile suit goodness! Made from the original TV series, these chronicle young Amuro Ray as he becomes the pilot of Gundam RX-78 and is thrust into the Zeon/Earth Federation war. (Bandai Entertainment; DVD, $69.98)

STEEL ANGEL KURUMI

Nakahito, a shy young man, accidentally awakens Kurumi, one of three extremely sexy androids known as "Steel Angels." (ADV Films; DVD, $29.99)

HOT PICK

YU YU HAKUSHO

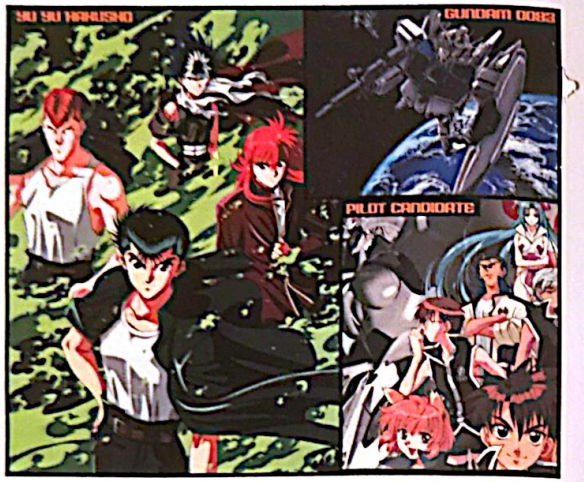
April on DVD, $29.95; FUNimation

When *Dragon Ball Z* topped the charts in Japan, only one show kept up with it: *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Yusuke Urameshi is a punk—failing his classes, getting into fights at the drop of a hat, etc.—with no friends and a mom who cares more for the bottle than him. No one figures he'd risk his life to save a young kid from a speeding bus—least of all him. But he does, and he dies for his troubles...but that's when his troubles really begin. Since he died before he was scheduled, the afterlife doesn't know what to do with him except make him a spiritual detective, investigating any disturbances caused by the demon world, alongside his former rival Kuwabara and other spirits. *Yu Yu Hakusho* is filled with action, magic and a great deal of humor as Yusuke tries to return to the land of the living, deal with the ladies and keep demons from taking over the earth—but still maintain his tough guy image!



DIVE INTO IT

CARTOON NETWORK'S *ADULT SWIM* EXPANDS!



Cartoons can be for more than just kids, a fact made hysterically clear by Cartoon Network's late-night *Adult Swim* programming block. Now, Cartoon Network is launching a block of pure anime aimed at adults—*Adult Swim Saturday*! Debuting in late February or early March, *ASS* will premiere three well-known anime that have never been shown on U.S. television before (*Yu Yu Hakusho*, *Pilot Candidate* and *Gundam 0083*), backed up by returning favorites like *Tenchi Muyo!*, *Outlaw Star* and *Cowboy Bebop*. Here's the 411 on the new shows:

YU YU HAKUSHO

Yusuke Urameshi is a teen street thug who, in an uncharacteristic act of heroism, sacrifices his own life to save a child. This earns him the right for a second chance at life on Earth, but it comes with a price: he has to hunt the dark spirits that prey on the Living World. To accomplish this goal, he's given the power to fire heavenly energy from his fingertips, and he gathers unlikely allies to help him in his quest.

PILOT CANDIDATE

The planet Zion is under attack by a powerful enemy from deep space, and their last hope is their fighting mecha, known as Goddesses. This series follows one trainee named Zero, who has to learn to fly a Goddess—and how to work with the other pilot candidates—to save his world!

GUNDAM 0083: STARDUST MEMORY

Three years after the cataclysmic One Year War, the Principality of Zeon and the Earth Federation are at peace. But a rogue group of Zeons, known as the Delaz Fleet, plan to rebuild their conquering army. Their first step is to steal a prototype Gundam, the GP02, which is equipped with a nuclear arsenal! ■ Kari Cramer

TUNE IN TOKYO

BE A FAN OF A SHOW ONLY ON THE AIR IN JAPAN

X

X, the manga, movie and OVA, is now a TV series! In fact, the OVA *Tsubasa/An Omen* was the prequel that set up this new series. Kumui and other people with special powers are being drawn to Tokyo as the struggle between the Dragons of Heaven and the Dragons of Earth continue. What struggle is that? Well, the Dragons of Earth want to wipe out humanity because of our abusing to the planet. The Dragons of Heaven see destruction as worth saving. While it may seem [illegible] as to which side to root for, what makes the series compelling is that Kumui listens objectively. And dang it, the Dragons of Earth make a better argument! American fans of *Dragon Ball Z* would love this series. It's got action, fighting and massive destruction left in the aftermath of superhuman battles.

Produced by the legendary Madhouse production house, it's written and directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri. It's currently running on the Wowow TV channel. ■ KC



LIKE A ROCK

MEGA MAN GETS A NEW LIFE IN JAPAN

Rockman, better known as Mega Man in the U.S., gets a new animated series in March on TV Tokyo. *Rockman.EXE*, based on the similarly titled Game Boy Advance game, is a departure from the Mega Man story you know from the Capcom videogames or the previous *Mega Man* anime. This Rockman isn't even a robot! He's a computer program, hence the .EXE suffix; he's been created to protect computers from viruses and cyber-crimes.



In the future, everyone is connected to the Net via portable computers called PET. Instead of Web browsers, users have Artificial Intelligence programs known as Net Navigators helping them do stuff. Schoolboy Hikari Netto is the computer genius who created Rockman, a Net Navigator that kicks virtual butt. Instead of using computers for downloading music or Britney pics, Hikari is something of an anti-hacker. He uses his skills to stop bad guys from doing bad things.

In the real world, Hikari has to deal with school, parents and bullies just like everyone else. But he and his friends also look for clues about the latest cyber-crimes. Who's behind it? What's their real objective? These answers often help Rockman in the virtual world, where all the action is. Rockman isn't limited to the cyberworld, though. He can infiltrate systems to help Hikari in the real world. If a building's security door won't open, Rockman can get in the system to open it. Seeing how popular *Mega Man* games are in North America, this TV series has an excellent chance of coming here. ■ KC



ON THE AIR

UPDATING AND INFORMING YOU ON BOOB-TUBE GOINGS-ON

ACTION CHANNEL

While no show times have been set, check your TV schedule (usually weekend late-nights) for commercial-free, uncut *Blood Reign: Curse of the Yoma*, *Cyber City OEDO 808*, *Demon City Shinjuku*, *DNA Sights 999.9*, *Gunsmith Cats*, and *Macross 2: Lovers Again*.



CARTOON NETWORK

Toonami: Weekdays from 5-7 p.m. The ever-shifting Toonami anime block will include *Dragon Ball*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Tenchi Muyo!*, *Tenchi Universe*, *Zoids* and possibly *Big O*. Also, Saturdays from 1-3 p.m. are solid two hours of *Dragon Ball Z*!

Midnight Run: Weekdays from 12-1 a.m. Set your VCRs for *Cowboy Bebop*, *Dragon Ball Z* and *Outlaw Star*.

Adult Swim: Saturday from 11 p.m.—1 a.m. See the related article for the big news!



FOX KIDS

Bad news: Fox has decided to cancel its weekday Fox Kids network programming, leaving it up to individual stations if they want to air syndicated cartoons or something else. Good news: Fox Kids' Saturday is still going strong and will be showing all-new episodes on all their shows!

Digimon: Digital Monsters: Sat. 9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Medabots: Sat. 9:30 a.m.

Mon Colle Knights: Sat. 11 a.m.

Transformers: Robots in Disguise: Sat. 8 a.m.



KIDS' WB!

Cardcaptors: With only 70 episodes of the original *Card Captor Sakura* made, the U.S. version is nearing the end of its run. But worry not, Sakura fans, there were also two movies made that should make their way to American shores.

Pokémon: Weekdays 3 p.m. & 4 p.m., Sat. 10-11 a.m.

Yu-Gi-Oh!: Yugi and his friends seek answers to the origin of the Millennium Puzzle.



SHOWTIME BEYOND

Check www.sho.com for scheduled times. Showtime's experimental channel shows uncut episodes of the *Fist of the North Star* TV series. ■ KC

FAN SERVICE

KEEPING IT REAL...NAUGHTY

In Japan, most nudity is not a social taboo, but it's still fun to look at. Hence the anime institution known as "fan service"—a.k.a. gratuitous female skin-baring. Of course, when anime comes to America, censors feel the need to make it safe for American kids, so out goes the skin. But just like you can't take the farm out of the boy, you can't take the cheesecake out of the anime.



TENCHI MUYO!

What does a space pirate have to do to win the love of Tenchi Masaki? Commit acts of violence and wear sleazy outfits; luckily, Ryoko does both. But Americans never saw all of the hot springs scenes, where Ryoko refuses to wear clothes at all.



COWBOY BEBOP

Faye Valentine is fan service. Every second of her screen time is a nugget of delight for boys of all ages.



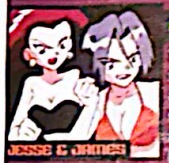
DRAGON BALL

Bulma: a victim of the standard anime practice of the shower scene. It was given up for *DBZ*, but in *DB*, she took far more baths and showers than the viewing public really needed.

OUTLAW STAR

Not that Cartoon Network mentions it, but the way Melfina pilots the ship is by stripping down and getting in a vat of goo. How that works, we don't know.





POKÉMON

There are way too many boys who watch Pokemon surely for evil Jesse and her evil midriff-baring shirts and short skirts. At least we hope it's Jesse, and not the episodes where James has breasts.

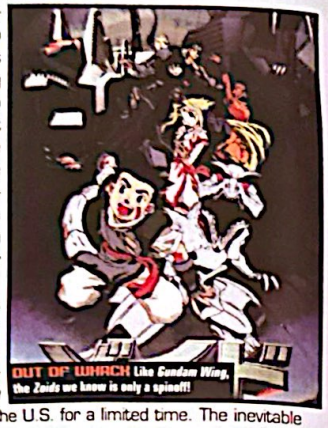
TRANSFORMERS: ROBOTS IN DISGUISE

When you think of sex icons of the 21st century, there's only one name everyone can agree on. Gas Skunk! So hot! ■ RB



ZOIDS...RETURN?

THE ZOIDS YOU'RE SEEING ARE ONLY THE LATEST



OUT OF WHACK Like *Gundam Wing*, the *Zoids* we know is only a spinoff!

Zoids was a last-minute addition to Cartoon Network's Toonami programming block this past year, so American fans might not be aware that the *Zoids* show they're watching is just the latest version of a Japanese phenom that's been going on for more than 10 years!

Zoids started out as a blockbuster toyline during the '80s in Japan featuring giant robot versions of animals—they were even offered in the U.S. for a limited time. The inevitable cartoon tie-in, *Machine Beasts New Century Zoids*, had a pioneering technique of combining CGI with traditional cel animation. The story revolved around Ban and Feene, two kids caught up in a war on the planet colony Zi.

The *Zoids* show on Toonami is actually the second TV sequel, *Zoids New Century/0*. It ignores previous continuity in an attempt to become more like *Pokémon*—no wars, just collecting Zoids and Zoid competition. If you would like to see the original, write Cartoon Network. ■ KC

GIRL OF STEEL

STEEL ANGEL ANIME GOES LIVE-ACTION



NO NEED FOR [illegible] These anime angels can go [illegible] on their own.

Steel Angel Kurumi, the anime that has had two TV series and an OVA series, is going to become a live-action weekly TV series in Japan! *Kotetsu Tenshi Kurumi Pure* is scheduled to debut in the spring. Haven't seen *Steel Angel Kurumi*? That's what *Anime Invasion* is for.

Kurumi looks and acts like any other energetic, teen girl, but she's really a super-strong android! Her one and only concern is for her master, Kagura Nakahito, a shy Shinto priest in training. Created by Dr. Ayano, Steel Angels were created to help humanity [illegible] just in case the world needs to be saved. But the government may have other ideas, which are carried out by Shogun and [illegible] academy. ■ KC

EVERYTHING YOU'VE WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE COMICS, THE MOVIE AND MORE!
WIZARD
SPIDER-MAN
SUPER SPECIAL
EXCLUSIVE KEVIN SMITH BLACK CAT PREVIEW
ALL-NEW ART COVER BY JOE QUESADA!
ON SALE IN APRIL
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wizardworld.com

ASTRO'S NEW TURF

SONY PROMISES BOY FLICK FOR 2004



We've heard this story before. Let's just hope this time it's true.

Sony Pictures has announced that it is developing Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* character into the star of the studio's first all-computer-generated feature.

Astro Boy, based on the Japanese comic book, is scheduled for release sometime in 2004. The studio's Imageworks F/X facility has already begun tackling test footage. Eric Leighton, who co-directed Disney's *Dinosaur*, has signed a seven-figure deal to shoot from a script by Todd Alcott (*Antz*) and Ken Kaufman (*Space Cowboys*).

The story follows a permanently youthful robot boy, modeled after the deceased son of a research scientist, who becomes a renowned superhero, complete with devices like laser-firing fingers, uncanny hearing and jet-powered boots—all eventually used to repulse an alien invasion of Earth.

Sony brass is eyeing Imageworks as its possible Pixar, the Disney-linked powerhouse behind the *Toy Story* films and *Monsters, Inc.*

This sounds great. But Sony has been promising an *Astro Boy* theatrical feature for almost three years now. On March 17, 1999, there was a front-page announcement in *The Hollywood Reporter* that Columbia (Sony) Pictures "is in final negotiations to buy film rights to *Astro Boy* with an eye toward [...] a Christmas 2000 release. It is also possible that Henson's Creature Shop will build *Astro Boy*."

When Christmas 2000 rolled around, this live-action feature with extensive CGI and animatronics was rescheduled to Christmas 2001. Now it is to be an all-CGI production for "sometime in 2004." Let's hope that it doesn't join Warner Bros.' *Speed Racer* live-action theatrical feature, promised off and on throughout most of the 1990s before finally fading into limbo. ■ Fred Patten

THE BUZZ

HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST?

DEATH'S CAREER MOVE

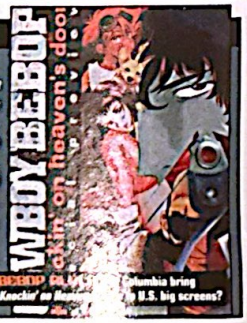
AOV Films will create an animated feature based on Chaos! Comics' gothic horror title, *Lady Death*. *Robotech* creator Carl Macek will write, produce and direct the retelling of the heroine's origin. The movie (due out next year) will be a hybrid of American and Japanese animation, with [illegible]-based Sunwin Image Pictures handling the drawing chores.

TWO CATS RETURN

Studio Ghibli's next feature will be *Neko no Ongaeshi* (*Cats Return a Favor*), directed by Hiroyuki Morita, due out Summer 2002. It stars the cats Muta and Baron, returning from *Whisper of the Heart* (1995). Since it is not Hayao Miyazaki-related (except for his executive [illegible] credit), it's possible a [illegible] will have a [illegible] yet the American theatrical [illegible]

SOMETHING TO HOPE FOR

If *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, Japan's 2001 movie feature spin-off of the mega-popular 1998 TV/OVA series, does not get an American theatrical release, it won't be because of a lack of interest from Columbia/TriStar. Inside word has it they are hellbent on bringing it to the U.S.



BLAST WITH THE PAST

DVD MAVENS MEDIA BLASTERS TO ENTER THEATER GAME WITH CLASSIC FLICKS

The big screen of American anime is being filled, slowly but surely. Media Blasters, an anime video and DVD distributor, has just announced it will be getting into the movie game. And while anime will take a back seat for now, the future looks good.

With three divisions—AnimeWorks for anime titles, Tokyo Shock for Asian live-action/adventure titles, and Shriek Show for European horror titles—Media Blasters' goal is "to have five or six theatrical releases by the end of 2002," says Mike Pascuzzi, MB's vice president of sales and marketing. Its first releases, tentatively scheduled for late February in NYC, will be from its Tokyo Shock line: two Hong Kong live-action sci-fi thrillers, *Riki-Oh* (1989) and *Robotrix* (1991).

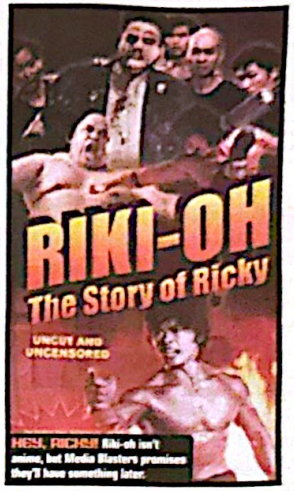
"We feel that our cult horror and Asian action titles have real potential for the theatrical market," Pascuzzi explains. "Some of these played on the art-house circuit a decade or more ago, or in international film festivals more recently, but there is a new American audience today that has only heard about them."

But why will Media Blasters' big anime library not be hitting the big screens soon?

Pascuzzi explains, "Our anime library consists primarily of titles that were TV series, like *Rayearth* and *Ruroni Kenshin*, or direct-to-video releases like *Kite* and *Apocalypse Zero*. Some of those are not convenient running times for a theatrical movie. Others were designed to look good on a small, home-TV screen."

Though there will be no anime releases in 2002 from Media Blasters, Pascuzzi tells fans not to worry.

"We are looking at acquiring anime theatrical movies that have not been released in America yet. We definitely plan to include anime in our theatrical library." ■ FP



COMING SOON!

JUST CAN'T KILL PIKACHU

Believe it or not, *Pokémon 4: Celebi, A Timeless Encounter*, the fourth annual *Pokémon* feature released in Japan theatrically last July, will come to the U.S. this summer.

In the latest installment, Ash and Pikachu are threatened by a menacing adult villain, Vicious (what do you bet that gets changed to Sweetums for America's kids?), the grown son of Jesse and James, who has come from the future to help them stop Ash from becoming the most famous Pokémon Master ever. This involves capturing Celebi, a new time-traveling Pokémon. Blah blah blah blah blah.



What a crock. The best anime theatrical features remain limited to small art-house releases in America, while the kids' formula pop, the equivalent of the *Land Before Time* series (up to number VIII so far), gets the big distribution. We're ticked!

What we want to see is Celebi sending Ash and Pikachu time-traveling back to the Spanish Inquisition, where Ash is burned to...well, ash...at the stake as a witch. Or to Pompeii in 79 AD for the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, which covered the city in scalding ash. Or to London in 1666 during the Great Fire. Or to Chicago in 1871 or San Francisco in 1906 for the great fires there.

HOME BOX OFFICE

2001 YEAR IN REVIEW

Without a doubt, Japan's theatrical anime scene in 2001 was dominated by the phenomenal success of Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*).

Released by Toho Films on July 20, it quickly surpassed Hayao Miyazaki's last film, *Princess Mononoke*, in setting new box-office records as the top-grossing theatrical movie in Japan, live-action or animated. Japan's next-biggest anime release (not counting *Final Fantasy*, a Japanese/American co-production) did barely 15 percent as well. ■ FP

FINAL TALLY FOR JAPANESE ANIME IN 2001

RANK	TITLE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASE DATE	GROSS TO DATE (IN US $)
1	Spirited Away	Toho Films	July 20	226,539,656+
2	Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within	GaGa Communications	Sept. 15 (July 2 in the US)	7,121,152
3	Famous Detective Conan: Countdown to Heaven	Toho Films	April 21	5,934,000
4	2001 Spring Toei Anime Fair	Toei Co.	March 2	4,529,268
5	Pokemon 4: Celebi, A Timeless Encounter	Toho Films	July 6	3,114,306
6	Doraemon: Nobita and the Winged Heroes	Toho Films	March 10	12,726,917?
7	Crayon Shin-chan Goes Wild!	Toho Films	April 21	2,084,000
8	Metropolis	Toho Films	May 26	659,197
9	Cowboy Bebop: Knockin' on Heaven's Door	Sony Pictures	Sept. 1	1629,785?
10	Initial B: Third Stage—The Movie	Toei Co.	Jan 12	485,000

HONORABLE MENTION

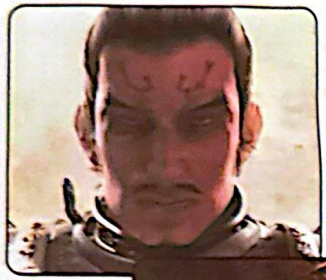
ONIMUSHA 2 DEFENDS THE REPUTATION OF ITS MOST FAVORED CLAN

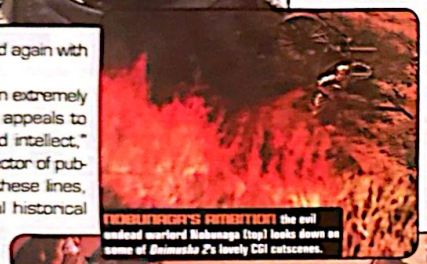
Samurais and zombies. Two great things that go better together. Or so Capcom's *Onimusha: Warlords* for PlayStation 2 proved.

A supernatural samurai action-adventure smash, *Onimusha* was a *Resident Evil*-influenced blockbuster that sold over 2 million units worldwide. It was inevitable that Capcom would draw its sword again with *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny*.

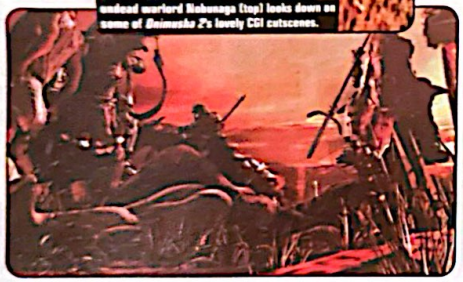
"Our primary goal is to make an extremely fun and entertaining game that appeals to the player's sense of culture and intellect," explains Melinda Mongelluzzo, director of public relations for Capcom. Along these lines, *Onimusha 2*'s tale blends actual historical accounts from 16th century feudal Japan with Jyubei Yagyu, a young master of the Yagyu Shin-in swordfighting style, and magic. While seeking revenge against Nobunaga, here a ruthless warlord and murderous villain, you may also note certain recognizable artistic influences. Says Mongelluzzo, "*Onimusha 2* is based on famed Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's style of storytelling and sense of culture. Visual symbolisms are used to express ideas." Mayhap that's what the company had in mind when it elected to use the image of deceased actor Yusaku Matsuda as the hero's face.

Still more compelling are new environments to explore, including the Town of Imashou, the demon-ridden Ogre Island and even a gold mine. During visits, you use new "Ohgi" sword techniques against foes, thereby breaking their weapons or eviscerating baddies without a second thought. For the pacifist, interims between duels prove just as rewarding as combat, thanks to oodles of new CG storyline movies, double the amount found in the game's predecessor. Such sequences benefit from collaborations with live-action actors that lend realistic facial and body movement patterns to the presentation. Even having developed these new features in time for *Onimusha 2*'s summer 2002 release, Capcom is looking for more. Explains Mongelluzzo, "The Onimusha franchise will continue and develop with technology." You'll have to grab your PlayStation 2 this summer and imagine what those developments could be. ■ Scott Steinberg





NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION the evil undead warlord Nobunaga (top) looks down on some of *Onimusha 2*'s lovely CGI cutscenes.



BITS OF BYTES

THE LATEST WORD ON GAMING

READY TO RUMBLE Bandai concurs, showing its support for this philosophy through the impending PS One release of *Digimon Rumble Arena*. Fur and feathers will fly as your favorite characters from season 1-3 clash in classic fighting game style arenas filled with trap-ridden environments. In short, more Mr. Mucus-Tummy.

SPIN CYCLE Years ago, Hyper's whirling, spiked shield cut NES-powered foes to ribbons. Soon is resurrecting the [illegible] for a Devil May Cry-style action [illegible] trusty monsters, creepy [illegible] and melee-heavy gameplay [illegible] maybe an old dog can learn [illegible] tricks.

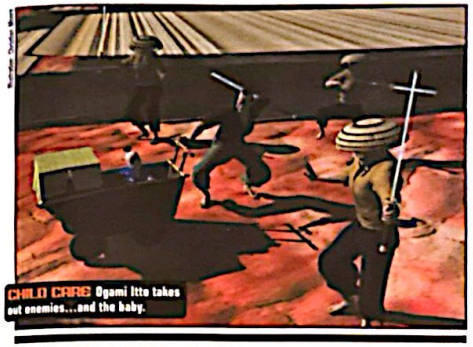
RETURN OF THE KING Agetec and From Software strike gold again as PS2 action-RPG *King's Field: The Ancient City* prepares for an American debut. Would-be heirs to the throne will soon ditch turn-based alternatives for a majestic, real-time 3D fantasy adventure. ■ SS



WE WISH

WHERE'S OUR LONE WOLF AND CUB VIDEO GAME?

The coolest samurai manga ever has deserved a video game for years, so we dreamed one up. It'd be two fighting games in one—when Ogami Itto, the former Shogun's executioner, has to fight the hordes of enemies coming to kill him, it'd be a 3-D *Final Fight* beat 'em up, with special moves involving his trap-riddled, gun-laden baby cart! But when it's time for a serious, one-on-one sword duel, it would switch to a fighting game—get hit in the gut with a sword, you die. And then there'd be blood and carnage, just like in the manga. Hey—no one ever said being a samurai hunted by ninja was pretty! ■ Robert Bricken



CHILD CARE Ogami Itto takes out enemies...and the baby.

HOT TIPS

SECRETS FOR THE BEST GAMERS ONLY

Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front (PS2)

Want to put a bigger hurt on the Earth Federation? Beat Simulation Programs 1 and 2 with an "S" Rank (meaning a total of 8,000 points or more), and you unlock Char Aznable, the Red Comet himself, and the young general Garma Zabi, respectively .





Sonic the Hedgehog Advance (GBA)

Not satisfied with the ending? Beat the game with all four characters and find all seven Chaos emeralds (there's one in each stage. Beat the game again with Sonic, and then you'll fight a final version of Eggman...in outer space!

Super S[illegible]ch Brother Melee (GC)

To see [illegible]phies of all the Japanese Nintendo systems, just switch [illegible] game language to Japanese. And after you get all the hid[illegible] characters and boards, you can get extra music for eac[illegible]ge in Versus mode, by hitting the L or R buttons when y[illegible]elect the stage! ■ RB

RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM

3/12: HOT SHOTS GOLF 3
(Sony); PlayStation 2
This series has won over many with its charm and incredible fun—sure, it's a golf game, but it's way more. Big headed Japanese people, incredible physics and great gameplay abound.



3/15: BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY
(Activision); GameCube
Human/beast hybrids maul each other for kicks. This time, the graphics have been overhauled, and new characters, stages, features and play modes (team battle, training, etc.) were added.



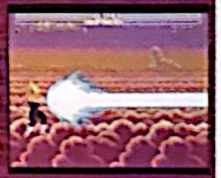
3/19: EVE OF EXTINCTION
(Eidos); PlayStation 2
Classic beat 'em up action. Your ex-girlfriend morphs into staves, blades and other assorted weaponry. From the makers of *Berserk* on Dreamcast.



4/16: AKIRA PSYCHOBALL
(AIA Games); PlayStation 2
A true first as an anime classic becomes a unique, 3D pinball game. Clips from the movie DVD play as you enjoy tables based off the anime movie and re-enact scenes through the pinball itself, all with crazy, original music.



5/16: DRAGON BALL Z: THE LEGACY OF GOKU
(Infogrames); Game Boy Advance
Action-adventurers mount a campaign to save Earth from the Saiyans and the universe from the evil Frieza's plans. Players must balance Melee and Ki fighting techniques, seeking out quests and battles as they go.



5/19: PINBALL OF THE DEAD
(Sega); Game Boy Advance
Zombies smell. They also eat brains. And in the off hours? Pinball's their game of choice. You'll cavort like a cadaver, tromping through multiple tables based on the cult-favorite light gun shooter *House of the Dead*.

Scanned with CamScanner

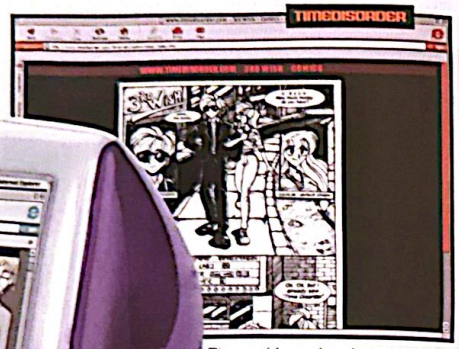
ONLINE UNDERGROUND

AMATEUR MANGA SITES GET PROFESSIONAL

Hanamakuru.com started it all: professional manga in a digital world.

Just like movies and comics have their own independant scene, fans of online manga likewise have said "I can do that too," and gave birth to their own underground culture. Unlike most commercial on-line manga, projects were available to download for free. Some of the art was good, most of it amateurish. Some of the stories were good, most were beginner tomes. Not any longer.





With the influx of technology (and apparently more time on people's hands), amateur fan sites with original content are getting better and better.

Like most things in fandom, the successful sites start off with a few readers, catch a buzz and slowly build a following. Megatokyo.com, started by Fred Gallagher and Rodney Caston, charts the adventures of their alter egos Piro and Largo, who are stranded in Tokyo (every otaku's dream). Published three times weekly, readers chart Piro and Largo's adventures and watch as the story unfolds. Megatokyo is well past the buzz stage. With over a million hits a month, the comic contains plenty of inside jokes for anime fans, poking fun at *Nadesico*, *Digi Charat* and *Card Captor Sakura*, to name a few. It also contains inside jokes for gamers and regular readers. Time Disorder (www.timedisorder.com), which has several online stories, and Genesis Chronicles (www.genesischronicles.com) are also gaining some popularity.

Whatever your taste in manga, chances are you can find free online fan manga to keep you happy. Of course, for all you talented artists out there, why not start up your own online comic? ■ Joe Curzon

ON SCREEN

OFFICIAL WEBSITES EVERY OTAKU NEEDS



CARDCAPTORS
www.clowbook.com
The Official *Cardcaptors* Site contains lots of fun puzzles, information and episode descriptions of the edited version of *Card Captor Sakura*. Accompanied with plenty of nice pictures of the characters and other details like, it is bound to keep Cardcaptor fans busy.

AKIRA
www.akira2001.com

ANGEL SANCTUARY
www.sentralpark.com/angel/

BLOOD
www.bloodthemovie.com

BLUE GENDER
www.bluegender.com

BOTCHAN
www.fankids.com/tv/botchan/

DRAGON BALL
www.dragonballonline.com

DRAGON BALL Z
www.dragonballz.com

ESCAFLOWNE MOVIE
www.escamovie.com

EVANGELION
www.gainax.co.jp/anime/eva/evaindex-e.html

FURIKURI
www.gainax.co.jp/flcl/index-e.html

FUSHIGI YUGI
www.viz.com/products/series/fushigiyugi/

GASARAKI
www.adultfilms.com/gasaraki/

GHOST IN THE SHELL
www.manga.com/ghost/ghost.html

GUNDAM
www.gundamofficial.com

IRRESPONSIBLE CAPTAIN TYLOR
www.tylor.com

METROPOLIS
www.metropolis-movie.com

PERFECT BLUE
www.perfectblue.com

POKEMON
www.pokemon.com

SANCTUARY
www.viz.com/products/series/sanctuary.html

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA
www.streetfighteralpha.com

TENCHI MUYO
www.tenchitv.com

X THE MOVIE
www.manga.com/x_m/

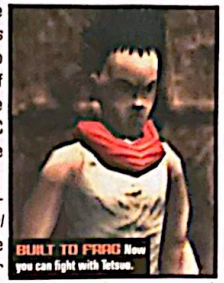
If you need a translation service to check out any Japanese sites, try www.excite.co.jp/world/url/

Type in the address, click the second radio button down and then hit go!

Mike Bach

MAKE YOUR OWN

ANIME CHARACTERS CAN NOW QUAKE UP YOUR *HALF-LIFE*



Game console players have it good: from *Jo Jo's Bizarre Adventure* to *Lupin* to *DBZ*, there's a wide range of anime-related games for the bean-bag-sittin crowd. But PC gamers don't have all the choices—until now.

Fans of first-person shoot-em-ups like *Quake 3*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Half-Life* have made player models of their favorite anime characters to insert into the games and frag each other. Have you ever wondered what Tetsuo would look like with a rail gun? Or perhaps the RX-78 GP01 Gundam is more your thing? Unfortunately, a *Dragon Ball Z* mod called *Bid For Power* was nixed before it ever hit the ground (now it's a *DBZ-inspired* mod). But there are plenty of anime characters to play with. Here's where to go to download your favorites.

http://www.planetquake.com/polycount/
http://www.geocities.com/omegale_mdl/
http://www.bidforpower.com/
http://dynamic.gamespy.com/~gundamuniverse/nd/downloads.htm ■ JC

HANGING 10

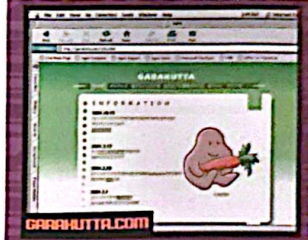
WHERE ANIME BIGWIGS SURF ONLINE

KAORU KUROSAKI

OCCUPATION: Writer
MAJOR WORKS: *Koi suru Riyu* (AKA: *Reason to Love*), scriptwriter for *Captain Tsubasa* TV series
HOMEPAGE: http://www.remus.dti.ne.jp/~kurosaki/



Kurosaki-san uses the Web to escape work by visiting the heartwarming Kimagure Garakutta Nishi (a.k.a. Lots of Fun Diary, http://garakutta.com/index.html), which features cute animation and shockwave games, or the soothing therapy of Nana-Chan Today (www.ceres.dti.ne.jp/~hanachan/hanad/hanad/htm), a bilingual photo diary about a real cat. When in the mood for darker humor, Kurosaki-san heads over to Dora-chan's Inside Thoughts (www4.airnet.ne.jp/mor/dora/), which adds commentary to the kid-favorite *Doraemon* comic with sarcastic or brutally honest dialogue.



■ Jen Contino

DANGER DANGER

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES

NINJA BURGER!

http://www.ninjaburger.com/



If you are always disappointed with your local pizza parlor's service, then why not try Ninja Burger, who promises "delivery in 30 minutes or less, or we commit Seppuku!" Masters of the Two-Spatula style, you know that the Big Kahuna burger has nothing on this Far East slab of beef. You can smell the flame-broiling flesh through your hard drive.

LET'S PLAY DANCING!

http://ja-f.tezuka.co.jp/play/games/dancing_atom/index.html



Unknown to many, Astroboy is in fact one of the greatest dancers ever! This Website is for the brave, those who wish to challenge Astroboy to a dancing competition. Playing this interactive game will help you add some moves to your karaoke time.

BIG GUNDAM!

http://www.geocities.co.jp/HeartLand-Himawari/2544/photosg.html



Many otakus like building model kits, especially Bandai's Gundam kits. This otaku has taken it to an extreme with a giant 1/2 scale model! The working beam sabre should be ready soon to beat any Zakus that terrorize the neighborhood.

HARI POTA

http://www.hari-pota.com/

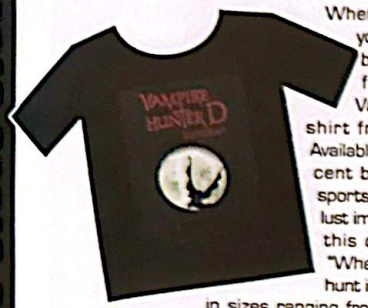


As Harry Potter fever sweeps the globe, muggles and otakus alike may wonder what the manga version of Harry Potter would look like. Well, according to this site, he would look a bit like a male version of Digi Charat. This site is in Japanese, but does it really matter? ■ JC

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STUFF

HUNT DOWN THIS TEE



When you're packing up your stakes and garlic before a big hunt, don't forget to don your Vampire Hunter D T-shirt from Urban Vision. Available now, this 100-percent black cotton T-shirt sports an awesome Bloodlust image on the front, with this quote on the back: "When the sun sets...the hunt is on." This tee comes in sizes ranging from L-XL for $16.99. Be sure to stake one for yourself now!



SAYONARA BLOODSUCKERS!

Are vampires plaguing your home? Is it impossible to even brush your teeth without getting gnawed upon? Then you need some serious vampire-hunting help, and Fewture Models has got some in the form of this full-sized statue! Star of the hit anime *Blood: The Last Vampire*, Saya stands a whopping 12" tall, sports a real cloth school outfit and stands on her base with a slain Chiropteran at her feet. She hits stores in June, and you can take her home for just $128! Hey, it's cheaper than a blood transfusion!



BANDAI BOOTY

Bandai serves up a second trio of spectacular sets based on your favorite anime TV series! Available now for $19.99 each, these sets of figures consist of two characters and a mecha from the Cartoon Network hit The Big O as well as Cowboy Bebop and Pilot Candidate.

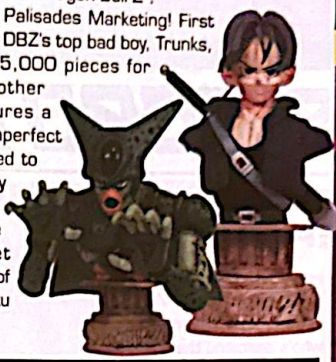


THE HUNT IS ON!

Those beautiful eyes, that dreamy hair...but this ain't no Backstreet Boy were talking about! It's Robotech's Rick Hunter, and now he's available as a 6 1/2" mini-bust from Toynami. Limited to just 2,500 pieces, the Rick Hunter bust is in stores now, and you can make him your dream date for just $39.99. (And what you guys do in that mecha of Rick's is your secret!)

BALL BUSTIN'

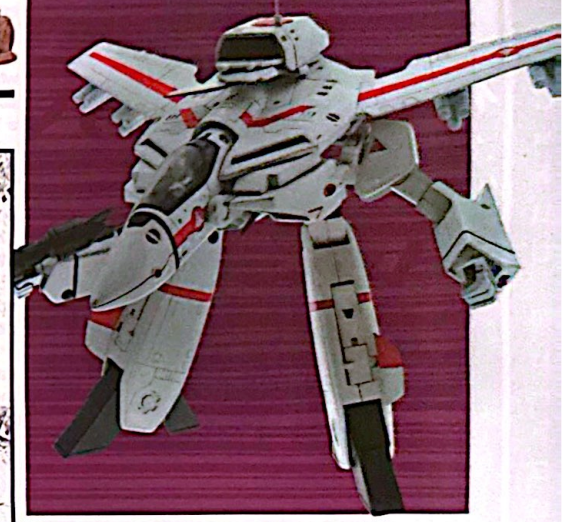
Check out these two Dragon Ball Z mini-busts from Palisades Marketing! First up is the bust of DBZ's top bad boy, Trunks, limited to just 5,000 pieces for $49.99. The other mini-bust features a sculpt of the Imperfect Cell, who's limited to just 3,000. Hurry up, since they're both available now (and get ready for a bust of Super Saiyan Goku on the way!).



HOT PICK

GET TECH EDUCATED

Robotech fans have been holding their breaths waiting for Toynami's Masterpiece Line to hit shelves—and now the wait is over! Scheduled to hit stores in April, the first Masterpiece release is VF-1J Rick Hunter, which transforms from Battloid to Guardian to Fighter. Made of die-cast metal and sturdy plastic, the VF-1J sports tons of cool features (including working LED light and removable pilot) and comes in a collector's box. It'll set you back $79.99, but move quickly, because it's limited to just 15,000 pieces.



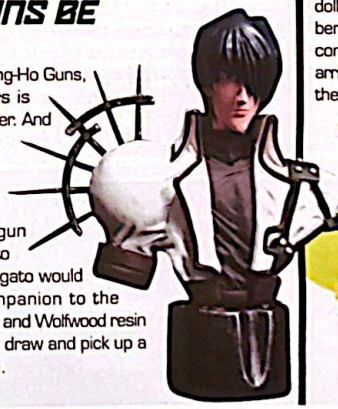
HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

Meet Fusé Kazuki, one of the crack C.A.P.O. troops from the anime movie *Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade*. Set in an alternate universe 10 years after World War II, the C.A.P.O.s are heavily armed troops designed to battle the anti-government forces waging chaos on the streets. Fusé stands 5" tall, comes with a variant, helmetless head, features 12 points of articulations and comes with enough weaponry to take out a small country! Look for Fusé in stores now, courtesy of Kaiyodo, for $12.99.



LET TRIGUNS BE BYGONES

The leader of the Gung-Ho Guns, Legato Bluesummers is one cold, deadly mother. And the his icy veneer and merciless scowl is brought to life by Palisades Marketing as a brand-new Trigun mini-bust! Scheduled to hit stores in April, Legato would be the perfect companion to the already-released Vash and Wolfwood resin busts. Be fast on the draw and pick up a Legato bust for $45.



FUZZY FANTASIES

You might have finished Final Fantasy X by now, but it's not finished with you! Straight from Japan come adorable plush dolls of perennial Final Fantasy favorites like Chocobo, Tonberry, Cactuar, Cait Sith and more. There'll be 4-inch dolls coming out in March for $9.99, and then 10-inch dolls arriving in April for 21.99. From Koto Inc./ArtFX. Summon these guys now!



BOY MEETS ROBOTS

HOT ARTIST PAT LEE SET TO CONQUER NEW TRANSFORMERS COMIC







When popular comic book creator Pat Lee was a kid, he spent his time making up his own Transformers comics, based on the popular good and evil robots disguised as cars, animals, insects, electronic equipment—and just about anything else you can imagine. Little did he realize that years later, he'd be getting paid for it.

Lee's production company, Dreamwave Productions, is creating a new comic series based on the popular anime, manga and toy line that's definitely more than meets the eye. "This has been a dream of mine since I was really young," admits Lee, who's pencilling the *Generation One* (G1) series. "I've been a Transformers fan forever!"

It was the fans who pushed Lee to go after the Transformers license. "When we did that *Wizard* centerfold [for *Anime Invasion*'s sister pub *Wizard*], the response was so positive that we decided to approach Hasbro with our ideas for a comic series."

Hasbro was definitely interested. A proposal or two later, the robots in disguise were ready to return. The new series promises to include familiar Autobots and Decepticons, but will also contain surprises. Although elements from previous comics and manga incarnations will be present, Lee's working to make Dreamwave's Transformers unique. "Artistically, I'm mixing elements of the toy design and anime along with my personal style. I hope to produce an intense, vibrant, complex and interesting animation-style book."

Joining Lee on this project will be scribe Chris Sarracini (*Dark Minds: Macropolis*). The *Generation One* comic book series, based on the initial Transformers characters, will roll out in April, and an ongoing series based on Hasbro's new toys is tentatively scheduled for release in July. ■ Jen Contino

QUICK READS

PAGE-TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

SUPER-DEFORMED TINY WARRIORS

Off the *record*, look for diminutive versions of your favorite medieval fantasy characters to soon be appearing in a ma... from CPM. Forget about checki... out Gilligan and his pals, look for this war-torn inlet instead.

MORE MARVEL MANGA?

Due to the success of Marvel's initial Mangaverse, we've heard that the House of Ideas might be adding a few ongoing Marvel manga series to their lineup. The initial offering from January 2002 met with rousing success and left ... wanting more.

TRIGUN? TRY SUMMER!

Rumor has it that by summer we might see the release of *Trigun* in manga form. There are several interested companies pursuing the rights, and an announcement should be forthcoming citing the company that wins this bidding war. ■ JC



NUTS FOR 'NAUTS!

'JOE!' CREATORS BRING BACK MICRONAUTS

It was a giant toy line and a cult-hit comic. Now, 16 years after the last issue from Marvel was published, *Micronauts* (based on the Japanese property *Microman*) is returning to the comic pages thanks to Devil's Due Productions.



"*Micronauts* is a classic space opera, starring a mismatched group of characters brought together in defiance of the evil Baron Karza. Space Glider, Acroyear and the rest vow to avenge their world and protect Earth," explains Joshua Blaylock, who became involved when the licensors, impressed with his relaunch of the G.I. Joe comic, contacted his company.

"We're revamping it to present-day standards, but retaining everything we feel was important in its history," Blaylock says. "We'll tie them in with some toys that were left out. We have this cool way that some characters take on the appearance of the toys with the silver faces. Unfortunately, we can't use Arcturus Rann, Manonette or Bug. But that won't slow us down!" ■ JC

MANGA BY THE NUMBERS

13,433 Preorders for *Lone Wolf & Cub Vol 17: Will of the Fang* TPB

4,151 Preorders for *Captain Britain* TPB

25 Amount of years Rumiko Takahashi's [Ranma 1/2] been making manga. She's one of the veteran female manga-ka in Japan.

25 Years industry staple Jenette Kahn, president and editor-in-chief of DC Comics has been working in comics.

301 Pages in *Akira Volume II* TPB

576 Pages in *Essential Ant-Man* TPB

5 Years it took for Sailor Moon merchandise sales to reach $3 billion

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: THE MANGA VS THE ANIME

Neon Genesis Evangelion (GAINAX), the popular story of teens piloting sentient, robotic-looking Evangelions against alien Angels bent on taking over the world, is fantastic, thrilling and exciting. If you enjoy the Viz comics and watch the ADV animes, chances are you noticed a few things just don't... mesh. We noticed 'em, too! Here's some differences.

HOW'D YOU GET THAT BOO-BOO?

• In the anime, we first meet Rei all bandaged and bruised, supposedly because Unit 00 went nuts and she got hurt as a result.
• In the manga, her injuries are a result of the third Angel attacking her, not her own unit.

OUT OF CHARACTER...

• Asuka comes across in the manga as quiet and demure—afraid to show her true fiery personality and colors to those around her.
• In the anime, Asuka has no problems from the get-go speaking her piece and knocking anyone in her way on their ass.

EXTREME ESCAPE

• In the anime, Misato and Shinji are escaping from an attacking Angel when Unit 00 appears to buy them some time.
• In the manga, Misato's insane demolition derby-style driving saves them from the Angel and Unit 00 isn't introduced at all until a few issues later.

MOMMY DEAREST?

• In the anime, Ritsuko's mom is in control of a supercomputer that NERV uses. Her spirit is the template for its mainframe.
• In the manga this isn't mentioned at all.
• In the anime, very late in the series, we discover that part of the soul of Shinji's mom is contained in the makeup of Unit 01—it's why Shinji bonded so quickly to the Unit.
• In the manga we discover this in fifth issue.



SECRETS REVEALED

• Vol. 5 of the manga ends with Kaji taking Shinji aside and telling him what he knows about the secrets surrounding the Evangelion units and the Angels.
• This revelation never happened in the anime.

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COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS SPRING!

MARCH 6

DRAGON BALL Z PART 5 #3 (Viz)
In his new, 10-foot-tall form, Freeza is more than a match for Vegeta and the heroes. Only Dende's healing power can prevent Kuririn and then Gohan from being utterly annihilated. But streaking across the planet at bullet speed is Piccolo, the strongest Namekian ever, with his strength now multiplied by that of the fallen warrior Nail. Akira Toriyama $2.95

OH MY GODDESS! PART XI #8: MYSTERY CHILD (Dark Horse Manga)
To prevent his and Belldandy's death, a pint-sized demon is ready to freeze all time forever! Keiichi's stolen the means to fix things, but then Belldandy will die with her double. What's a guy to do? Part 6 (of 8). Kosuke Fujishima/Studio Proteus $3.50

RANMA 1/2 PART 11 #1 (Viz)
Pantyhose Taro returns with a vengeance and he's after Happosai and anyone who stands in his way. He is guarded with the water of his cursed spring, and no one wants to be cursed with that. Rumiko Takahashi $2.95 U.S.

MARCH 13

BASTARD!! #4 NINJA!! PART 2 OF 3 (Viz)
Dark Schneider and the Metallicanan forces break into Ninja Master Gara's stronghold! While the knights of Metallicana fend off a man-eating minotaur, Dark Schneider and Princess Sheila explore the secret, dungeon entrance to the castle, becoming better acquainted in the process. But waiting in the dungeon are terrible monsters—will the two survive? Kazushi Hagiwara MATURE READERS $3.95

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #66: BEASTS (Dark Horse Manga)
Hyakurin's killed many Itto-ryu swordsmen, but now she and Shinnji have no place left to run. When the enemy has them backed against a wall with vengeful swords drawn, how can the two hope to escape? Part 1 (of 7). Hiroaki Samura/Studio Proteus MATURE READERS $2.99

MARCH 20

CERES, CELESTIAL LEGEND PART 2 #4 (Viz)
Aya spends the night with Tôya, who is the apple of her eye. But should she really be trusting him? Then Yûhi spends the entire evening searching to find Aya and answers. And, what happens when Aya winds up in the most dangerous part of Tokyo? Yû Watase $2.95

GUNDAM: THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TRADE BOOK (Viz)
Everything you ever wanted to know about Gundam but were too intimidated or afraid to ask is in this comprehensive manual. $12.95

INU-YASHA PART 6 #11 (Viz)
Jinenji, a demon cared for by an old woman, takes on another demon. Is one good, or are they both evil? Also, Kikyo is taken to a castle where a lord with a hidden agenda has summoned her. And when flaming demon remains fall from the sky, it must be a job for Inu-Yasha. Rumiko Takahashi $2.95

MARCH 27

ASTRO BOY VOL. 1 TP (Dark Horse Manga)
Astro Boy was the first manga series to be adapted to animation and became a worldwide phenomenon. Astro Boy is a jet-powered, super-strong, evil-robot-bashing, alien-invasion-smashing powerhouse. Osamu Tezuka/Studio Proteus $9.95

POKÉMON ADVENTURES PART 6 #4: SHADOWBOXING GENGAR (Viz)
The battle between the team of Lieutenant Surge and Bill vs. Bruno rages while the super nerd wakes up and becomes a threat! Meanwhile, the history between Agatha and Professor Oak is discovered. $4.95

SUPER MANGA BLAST! #20 (Dark Horse Manga)
Five stories, including installments of: *What's Michael? Shadow Star, Seraphic Feather, Club 9* and *3x3 Eyes*. Five flavors of your favorite manga in one neat place! Various contributors/Studio Proteus MATURE READERS $5.99

APRIL 3

NADESICO GRAPHIC NOVEL #3 (CPM Manga)
When Mars is attacked by alien invaders, the United Earth Government desperately orders the creation of a new kind of space battleship, the Nadesico. On Mars, a ragtag crew discovers Nergal's research facility and the legendary Yamato. Kia Asamiya $15.95

APRIL 17

SLAYERS SPECIAL #4 (CPM Manga)
Red Marimo—the gourmand's dream, and Lina and Naga have just gotta have it! After all, Lina may be the most dangerous sorceress in the world and Naga may be beautiful, but that doesn't pay the bills or put food in their mouths. Will they be able to get the Red Marimo? Hajime Kanzaka and Tommy Ohtsuka $2.95

APRIL 24

LONE WOLF AND CUB VOL. 20: A TASTE OF POISON (Dark Horse Manga)
Tired of his hired help's futile attempts to stop Lone Wolf and Cub, the shogun sends a master of poison to join the hunt for ronin Itto Ogami and his little boy Daigoro. Soon the two are surrounded on all sides, facing deadly secret agents, murderously seductive prostitutes and a river of poison flowing all around them! Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima MATURE READERS $9.95

RECORD OF THE LODOSS WAR: DEEDLIT'S TALE # 8 (CPM Manga)
Pam and Deedlit join the Freedom Knights to aid in the liberation of Kanon. But the Marmo army is hot on their trail, and the only place to escape is the Forest Of No Return. Ryo Mizuno and Masato Natsumoto $2.95

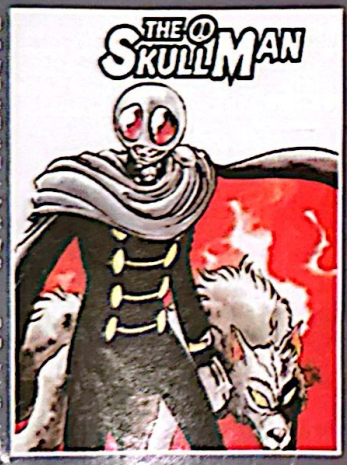
OTHER APRIL RELEASES

FUTABA-KUN CHANGE VOL. 8 #3 (Ironcat)
Finally, Futaba's genetic heritage is explored after his class trip's airplane crashes near the Shimeru Island. Everyone swims ashore, only to discover a gender-bending populace, much to their confusion/dismay. Adding to the fray, Kunin announces that he/she will marry Futaba now that they're on the island. Oh, no! Can Misaki [illegible] Futaba escape Kunin's clutches? MATURE READERS Hiroshi Aro $2.95

HOT PICK

SKULL MAN VOLUME # 1

TokyoPop $9.99 (April 2002)



WHY IT'S COOL: **This is a traditional "superhero"-based manga. It's also the final deathbed collaboration by manga legend Shotaro Ishinomori (*Cyborg 009, Kamen Rider*). The Skull Man's family, face and soul were taken from him. Now, he's going to get revenge. Resurrected from the land of the dead, he's hunting down the men responsible for destroying his life. In an unjust world, the Skull Man will use any means necessary to get the vengeance he seeks!**

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: **Locked between the lethal but gorgeous assassin Maria and the mutant Spider Man, the Skull Man digs into the conspiracy that gave birth to his powers and those of his partner Garo. Haunted by his past, will he let nothing stand in the way of revenge?**

VAMPIRE YUI VOLUME 4 #3 (Ironcat)
Several combatants enter the human world searching for Yui, only one with her safety in mind.... Senju must face the daunting Mr. Kanzaki before he can find Yui. However, Rasa finds Yui first and another battle commences as Yui tries to protect her new friend! Narumi Kakinouchi and Toshihiro Hirano $2.95

VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU GRAPHIC NOVEL #2 (Ironcat)
Now that Miyu has explored her past and has come to accept her place in the human world, she continues her quest hunting stray Shinma. Marvel at the beautiful artwork as Miyu faces new enemies, discovering mermaids, possessed dolls and a man with a pair of wings...! Narumi Kakinouchi and Toshihiro Hirano $17.95

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA #27 (TokyoPop)
Having defeated Yueh, all of the cards are now Sakura's and the world is as it should be. Or is it? Strange things are happening in Tomoeda, and they all seem to be connected—first a dream Sakura can't remember, then a new student comes to her school and finally a strange rain begins. CLAMP $2.99

KODOCHA #4 (of 5) (TokyoPop)
Peace finally returns to the war zone of Class 3 when Akito Hayama dukes it out with bratty Gomi and reclaims his title as boss of the sixth grade. But Hayama's victory lap becomes a sulk, and everyone wonders what has the Demon so depressed. When his dark mood turns violent, Sana gets a crazy hunch that her new role in a TV movie may help solve her friend's problems. Miho Obana and Sarah Dyer $2.99

RAGNAROK #3 (of 4) (TokyoPop)
As the Valkyries lock in on her trail, Fenris has begun to recover her memory and now has a direction in her quest to find the reincarnation of Balder. Meanwhile, Chaos and Iris have defeated the monstrous face worms that were destroying the countryside, and are off to collect their bounties...that is, if the so-called "expert treasure hunter" Lidia doesn't snatch the bounties first. Myung Jin Lee and Richard A. Knaak $2.99

COWBOY BEBOP VOLUME ONE (TokyoPop)
What's money between friends? But, wait...who said they were friends? The lone wolf, the wizened vet, the femme fatale, the smart-mouthed kid—when Spike, Jet, Faye and Ed get together, it can mean only one thing: carnage is about to ensue. In keeping with the popular but offbeat anime, the manga begins a series of original stories that take the action to a whole new level. Spike, Jet and Faye all end up after the same bounty. Spike goes after a convict who's already in prison and Faye (the con-artist she is) ends up the victim of a con not once, but twice. Yutaka Nanten $9.99

PARASYTE #10 (TokyoPop)
The Japanese government is now striking back. Shin, one of only two humans to co-exist with a Parasyte, has been recruited to join a military raid on the Parasytes' stronghold. But he's not the only civilian involved—a serial killer who makes Hannibal Lecter look tame has been released from prison to join the assault. Hitosi Iwaaki MATURE READERS $12.99

JULINE #5 (TokyoPop)
It's the final battle between the Black Pearl Clan and the Jeweled Mirror, Water Crystal and Ivory Sword clans. But victory cannot be claimed until Juline and her friends, Bakuya, Seika and Kio, face their loved ones, who have become unwilling Guardians of Black Pearl Temple. For the honor of her clan—and for her own life—Juline is forced to fight her father to the death. Narumi Kakinouchi $12.99

HARLEM BEAT Vol. 10 (TokyoPop)
Nate and the Johnan High Basketball Team are on their way to the National Championships, so why aren't they celebrating? With exams looming, some key players are worried that their test performances could have them sitting out one of the most important games of their lives. Nate, who's finally proven himself on the court, may be sidelined just as quickly as he found his game. It's time to buckle down and get focused...of course, that's assuming his girl-crazy teammates don't push him off-track. Yuriko Nishiyama $[illegible].99

GETTING TO KNOW

TOMOKO TANIGUCHI



In the U.S., Tomoko Taniguchi's most recent works *Princess Prince* (CPM Manga) and *Spellbound* (Fanboy) are meeting with rousing success. Her new CPM Manga series, *Let's Stay Together*, is due out by summer. Tomoko's shy, but we got her to open up a little about manga, anime and chocolate!

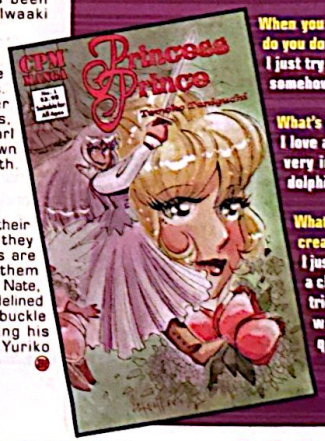
What's your favorite manga?
All of my favorites are manga I read when I was a high school student. I heard news that my "old" favorite manga *Kimen Gumi* (an epic comedic story from JUMP) would be started again. I'm interested to see it, because the last episode was very strange and controversial. At the end of this epic series, everything that happened was revealed to be a *dream*!



What's your favorite snack food at 2 a.m.?
I love *chocolate*! I love Japanese chocolate, but Godiva is best in the world. It's expensive, so I can't eat it every day! I love See's chocolate in the USA, too. Also potato chips, but they aren't good at 2 a.m.!

What kind of anime do you watch?
I watch animation that adult people can enjoy. Not like *Pocket Monster* or *Sailor Moon* types. Adult does not mean "pornography" in Japan. We have lots of family animation even adult people can enjoy like *Digimon*.





When you get creative blocks what do you do to overcome them?
I just try to finish until deadline—somehow—I just do it.

What's your favorite animal?
I love all animals. I'm especially very interested in whales and dolphins.

What do you like the best about creating manga?
I just love drawing and making a character come to life. I've tried some different jobs, but whatever happens, I can't quit creating manga. ■ JC

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BY J. CALEB MOZZOCCO

MANGA PRICE GUIDE

WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S NOT AND WHY

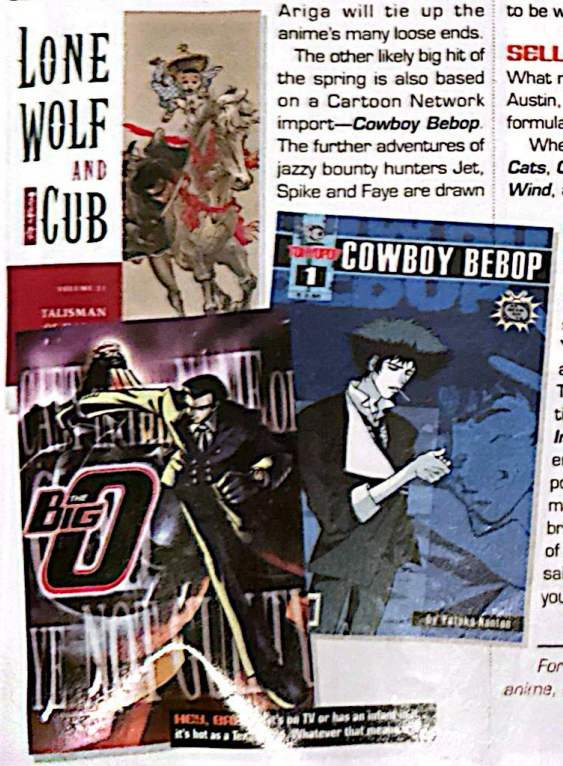


Negotiator Roger Smith knows size really does matter. His giant robot named *Big O* may turn out to be one of the giant manga successes of 2002, as some retailers are expecting the new *Big O* manga to be a big hit. We talked to retailers around the country to see just what's hot and what's not quite so hot on their manga shelves.

BASED ON A TV SHOW

The Big O debuted just last month, but fan anticipation had been high for months prior. Based on the series aired Stateside on Cartoon Network last year, the manga by Hitoshi Ariga will tie up the anime's many loose ends.

The other likely big hit of the spring is also based on a Cartoon Network import—***Cowboy Bebop***. The further adventures of jazzy bounty hunters Jet, Spike and Faye are drawn by Yutaka Nanten.



"We've had a lot of people asking about them," said Mike Malve, owner of Atomic Comics in Mesa, Arizona.

Both titles are seeing their sales bolstered by a sort of golden rule of manga sales in America—if it's on TV, it's moving off the comic shop shelves. "The more cross-reference, the better," Malve said. Still-popular manga mainstays ***Dragon Ball***, ***Dragon Ball Z*** and ***Sailor Moon*** are proof of that.

Of course, there's exceptions to every rule. New mecha melodramas from the ***Gundam***-verse continue to invade American airwaves, but consumers aren't as excited about the Viz comics series as they once were, or as they continue to be with other Gundam merchandise.

SELLING LIKE FISHCAKES

What makes for a strong seller? David Wheeler, owner of Austin, Texas-based shop The Dragon's Lair, cites a classic formula: "Good art and a good story."

Wheeler cites Dark Horse's ***Oh My Goddess!***, ***Gunsmith Cats***, ***Cannon God Exaxxion***, ***Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind***, and ***Ceres Celestial Legend***.

BEHIND EVERY HOT BOOK IS A HOT CREATOR

Consumers follow particular creators as much as particular books. Among the current favorites are shojou creative collective CLAMP, ***Fushigi Yugi*** creator Yu Watase and master animator (and manga creator) Hayao Miyazaki. Perennial safe bet Rumiko Takahashi is on just about everybody's hot list—particularly for her action-packed romantic comedies ***Inu-Yasha*** and ***Ranma 1/2***. Other super-strong sellers include the huge ***Akira*** trades ("Akira is really popular, even with the people who don't normally buy manga," said T.D. Stadell of Million Year Picnic in Cambridge, Mass.) and tiny ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** collections of big samurai action. "You just get hooked," Stadell said. "They're $10.45 apiece, and once you buy one you're ready to buy them all."

For questions to J. Caleb Mozzocco or about collecting anime, e-mail us at AnimeInvasion@aol.com.

2001 NIGHTS
VIZ (1991)
TRADE PAPERBACKS
1A softcover ... 17.00
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TPB - Journey beyond Tomorrow 17.00
TPB - Children of the Earth ... 17.00

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3 X 3 EYES: CURSE OF THE GESU
DARK HORSE (1995-1996)
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TPB ... 13.00

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PART 3 (1995)
1-7 ... 2.75
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1-6 ... 2.75
PART 5 (1996)
1-7 ... 2.75
PART 6 (1996-1997)
1-6 ... 2.75
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1-4 ... 10.00

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ASIAPAC (1989-CURRENT)
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THE TOP 30

COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME

BY JEN CONTINO



30. DEEDLIT

RECORD OF THE LODOSS WAR
CPM Manga

Deedlit is a High Elf from the Forest of No Return armed with a Silhouette Rapier. Even though its blade is thin, the sword is made from a special elven alloy and nearly unbreakable. Very close to nature, the battle-ready warrior often calls upon the spirits of wind and water to aid in travels.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Her first cousins are the Keebler elves. That's why Deedlit is so uncommonly good!



29. YAKUMO

3 X 3 EYES
Dark Horse Manga and Innovation

Yakumo was a mortal 15-year-old boy until Pai, the last surviving member of the Sanyyan (the Three-Eyed-Ones) race showed up on his doorstep. During an attack, Yakumo was killed, then revived when Pai used her powers. Now he's an immortal and linked to the Sanyyan.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Tired of searching for the statue, Yakumo buys one from Chinatown and tries to convince Pai it's the real McCoy!

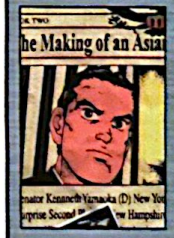


28. MIAKA

Fushigi Yugi, Dark Horse Manga

Imagine reading a book about a faraway land and then suddenly being transported to that magical place. That's what happened to Miaka, and now she's searching for a way to return home to the present. She's magically linked to her best friend, so any injury or problem Miaka has in the past, her friend suffers in the present.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Can't tell the difference between O-Town, N*Sync or 98°...so, wait...maybe that's a good thing!



27. KEN YAMAOKA

Eagle, Viz Comics

Yamaoka, a third-generation Japanese-American, has all the qualifications of a presidential candidate: he studied at Yale, he fought on the front lines of Vietnam, he's been a Senator for several terms. Now he's challenging the Vice President to get on the Democratic ticket. His campaign trail is filled with intrigue and trouble, yet Yamaoka weathers all in stride.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Thinks Bob Dole is "bad-ass."



26. BRIAREOS HECATONCHIRES

Appleseed, Dark Horse Manga

Briareos is an eight-eyed, bulletproof cyborg who kicks butt—but only when he has to. He doesn't know whether his homeland is the ideal utopian society or something...worse. He acts as a moral and spiritual guide for his friends and is very loyal. Like all interesting people, he has a price on his head.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: The price? $2.50.

continued on page 82

GREEN BAR ...E HAS GONE UP • RED BAR PRICE HAS GONE DOWN • BLUE BAR NEW RELEASE

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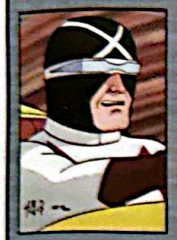
THE TOP 30
COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME



25. Hotaru Tomoe/ Sailor Saturn
Sailor Moon, TokyoPop

Although physically Hotaru Tomoe looks quite weak and frail, inside her body is the most powerful Sailor Scout, the sleeping soldier of destruction, Sailor Saturn. Possessed by evil, Hotaru had the touch of decay and destruction; other times, her touch could bring peace and healing.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Hotaru went from being an omnipotent, omniscient, independent being to an infant who wants her baa baa.



24. Racer X
Speed Racer and Racer X, WildStorm

Fast cars, faster women and lots of action: forget 007, baby! Go for the X! Racer X is the mysterious, brooding, masked racer seen throughout the various *Speed Racer* incarnations. He's also Speed's older brother, Rex. Many people think Rex is dead, but he's really just in disguise, doing his duty, for the good of the world.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: His real name is Rex Racer. Go Rex Racer, Go!



23. Alita
Battle Angel Alita, Viz

Just like the Bionic Woman was rebuilt after an accident, Alita is rebuilt after parts of her are found in a scrapyard. She has a human brain housed within a cybernetic body. Bounty Hunter, singer, racer, musician: Alita's not sure of her past or what she was, but secrets are unfolding that will definitely affect what she becomes.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Once Alita's head was grafted to a cyborg monkey body, making her Battle Angel Monkey Alita.



22. Kamui
X/1999, Viz

The fate of the world rests on the shoulders of teenager Kamui, but does he want to save it...or bring about the apocalypse? He'll either side with the Dragons of Heaven or the Dragons of Earth—both are tempting this high-school sophomore to their side.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: He secretly wants to ditch this "savior" or "chaos-bringer" role and become a member of the Backstreet Boys. He's been practicing for weeks.



21. Inu-Yasha
Inu-Yasha, Viz

Half demon, half human, 50 years ago Inu-Yasha was pinned to a tree and placed in suspended animation by one of the objects of his affection. See what happens when you don't call like you say you will, guys? Once he's freed, Inu-Yasha learns the reasons he was betrayed and also discovers [illegible] about both his human half and his [illegible] [illegible] with the demon...

EMBARRASSING SECRET: [illegible] and Yash[illegible] "demon." Probably [illegible] his favo[illegible] is Scooby-Doo.

CERES: CELESTIAL LEGEND
VIZ (2001)
1 ... 3.25
2-8 ... 3.00
PART 2 (2001-CURRENT) ... 3.00

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PART 2 (1996-1997) ... 3.50
1 ... 3.50
2, 3 ... 3.25
TPB (Reprints Part 1 #1-5) ... 13.00

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BOOK 2 (1989-1990)
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PART 3 (1995-1996)
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1B San Diego Con excl. cover ... 10.00
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1A Hughes Cover ... 3.00
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2B Warren Cover ... 3.00
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3B Warren Cover ... 3.00
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4B Warren Cover ... 3.00
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DOMINION: CONFLICT 1 - NO MORE NOISE
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DOMINION: PHANTOM OF THE AUDIENCE (1996)
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THE TOP 30
COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME



20. Rei Ayanami
Neon Genesis Evangelion, Viz

Rei was the first child chosen to be an Evangelion pilot. She got injured badly in her initial trial run of Eva Unit 00, but still was ready—bruised and broken—to jump out of her hospital bed and get right back on that horse...or, mochi! She's cold, emotionless, tough-as-nails and driven.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: She once smiled. And just like the old wives' tale, her face crashed! Ever since, she's kept her emotions hidden for fear of causing more facial damage.



19. Michael
What's Michael?, Dark Horse Manga

The cat of a million faces, Michael is every cat and any cat. Whether torturing humans with his bizarre cat ways or simply getting a drink down at the local bar, Michael's an ordinary tomcat with his own ideas about the ways of the world. And like all cats, he has no tolerance for anyone who wants him to be the perfect kitty. He's like reality TV's version of Garfield.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Kibble's catnip—would rather smell soiled undies instead.



18. Vegeta
Dragon Ball Z, Viz

Cunning. Ruthless. Cruel...and these are his good qualities! Vegeta, the proud prince of planet Vegeta, started out as a villain but now fights with the good guys. (Of course, he still hopes to have the pleasure of one day killing Goku.) Vegeta's tough, and when the moon is full, he morphs into a giant monkey with tremendous strength.

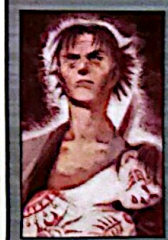
EMBARRASSING SECRET: Even when he's not in monkey form, Vegeta has the jones for bananas so badly that he'd do almost anything for them.



17. Kei and Yuri
Dirty Pair, Dark Horse Manga

What could be cooler than two bikini-clad bounty hunters who always hit their mark and leave a big impression—in more ways than one? Whether it's terrorists, techno-criminals or common thieves, they always get their man....or woman...or sentient blob of goo. And, like Charlie's Angels, they look picture-perfect at all times.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: They're called the Dirty Pair, but not because of their questionable techniques! Neither Kei nor Yuri like to bathe.



16. Manji
Blade of the Immortal, Dark Horse Manga

Manji's a ronin, a masterless samurai who found out that all the people he'd killed in the name of honor weren't evil souls, but innocent victims. Also, he didn't make a lot of friends that way and now has a price on his own head. Manji's ready to die, but has been cursed to live until he makes up for the 100 innocent lives he took by killing 1000 villains. He's got a tough row to hoe, but 12 special swords to help him do it!

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Manji still cries every time Bambi's mom gets shot.

continued on page 84

GREEN BAR ... HAS GONE UP • RED BAR PRICE HAS GONE DOWN • BLUE BAR NEW RELEASE

THE TOP 30
COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME



15. Ataru Moroboshi
Urusei Yatsura, Viz

Ataru Morobushi is always chasing after one girl or another—much to his wife Lum's regret. He's a hopeless flirt and dreams of his own harem, and even though Lum is the true object of his affection, Ataru's just too stubborn to admit it. Hiding behind one-liners and innocence, he appears dumb, but looks can be deceiving!

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Gets all his dating tips from *Saturday Night Live*'s "Ladies' Man."



14. Sailor Moon
Sailor Moon, TokyoPop

Fighting evil by moonlight and winning love by daylight is typical for the one named Sailor Moon! Usagi's a wimp, but when the going gets tough, and she gets the urge to run, she sticks to her guns and sees the job through. Even when she's almost petrified with fear, Serena's willing to forge her own safety and protect her friends and the world. She's a Princess with a punch!

EMBARRASSING SECRET: She can fight to save the world, but can't conjugate verbs to save her life.



13. Duo Maxwell
Gundam Wing, Viz and TokyoPop

Duo's the 15-year-old pilot of Gundam Death-scythe. He's a master of stealth operations, but in all-out battle he makes his presence known with wild antics and loud, boisterous comments. He doesn't back down and isn't afraid of much. He's also a little crazy—after all, he believes himself to be the "god of death."

EMBARRASSING SECRET: God of Death wasn't his first choice. Duo wanted to be the God of Worm, Fluffy Things, but that title was already taken.



12. Yui
Vampire Princess Yui, Studio Ironcat

Part vampire, part Shi (another supernatural element) Yui is the bane of some Shis' existence and has many enemies. She gets magic power from cherry blossom trees and the like she protects, until she's powerful enough to summon its original guardian. Yui's not a total stiff— she likes to laugh and have fun—but also honors her obligations to family, friends and tradition.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Enjoys watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; thinks Riley is "hot."



11. Kaneda
Akira, Dark Horse Manga

Riding a motorcycle cooler than anything the Fonz, Evel Knievel or Luke could ever dream of owning, Kaneda's one bad stud! He's a punk: loyal to his friends, tenacious and clever—when he needs to be. He's leader of a pack of tough teens surviving in a world that makes Mad Max's look like Disneyland.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Kaneda was scouted by [illegible] people after his [illegible]

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THE TOP 30
COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME



10. Captain Harlock
Captain Harlock, Eternity

He's the toughest pirate king in the galaxy. The tall, black-clothed, cigarette-dangling deadpan with a saber-like is always ready for a challenge or two...or 40. His ship bears the symbol of the Jolly Roger, but that's not to scare folks; it's to inspire the fighting spirit within us all. Mix Wolverine with Han Solo and you've got the man that is Captain Harlock.

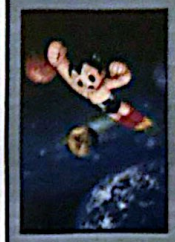
EMBARRASSING SECRET: By night, he's a night-club dancer. Codename: Captain Harlet.



9. Shinji Ikari
Neon Genesis Evangelion, Viz

Fourteen-year-old Shinji Ikari's got the fate of the world in his hands—or rather, in the powerful mech hands of his Evangelion. One of the chosen few pilots, he's a dark, brooding loner full of more angst than the coast of Devonport's Creek combined! He vacillates more than Hamlet, but his performances are a lot easier to follow.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Watches old first-season *Lassie* episodes—not to see all the cute chicks in leg-warmers, but to see Julie play the cello.



8. Astro Boy
Astro Boy, Dark Horse Manga

Astro Boy is a jet-powered, super-strong, and robot-smashing, alien-monster-bashing, robotic boy with a heart and lots of soul! Built in the year 2002, he learned to love humanity and vowed to protect it. Beloved by all of Japan (he's as well-known as Mickey Mouse), he's fearless, strong and not afraid of a challenge!

EMBARRASSING SECRET: He isn't really a robotic boy at all, but a 54-year-old aluminum alloy-clad midget named Buck.



7. Ranma Saotome
Ranma 1/2, Viz

Poor Ranma has a problem: cold water turns him into a girl and hot water changes him back to a boy. His life is dedicated to finding a cure for himself and his father (who turns into a panda), but he still has time to defend his honor (and the female Ranma's) in never-ending martial arts competitions!

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Only shops at Victoria's Secret when he's a woman, but he wears the lingerie any old time.



6. Lupin III
Lupin III, Manga Action Weekly

Lupin III, Japanese grandson of the famed French thief Arsène Lupin, is the personification of the gentleman-thief. He's suave, smooth, quick with a gun and even quicker to lull for a pretty face. Even in the most dire straits or dangerous situations, Lupin's incredible luck, skill, style and charm make James Bond seem like the Cable Guy.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: In high school Lupin was a nerd—complete with pocket protector and more zits than a ladybug has spots.

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THE TOP 30

COOLEST MANGA CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME



5. BELLDANDY

Oh My Goddess!, Dark Horse Manga

Belldandy's an innocent, polite, soft-spoken, sweet goddess (of the Present) First Class. When Keiichi accidentally dials her number instead of the take-out food line, she appears and offers him any wish. The teen thinks it's a joke and wishes she'd stay with him forever. Be careful what you wish for! Not one to shirk her duties, Belldandy packed up her gear and moved into case Keiichi.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Before working on the Goddess Line she was a telemarketer. "Shudder."



4. GOKU

Dragon Ball, Viz

Originally Goku, a Super-Saiyan warrior, was sent to Earth to kill everyone and prepare the planet for its new owners. An accident left him with amnesia and, instead of destroying the world, he became one of its greatest fighters. He fights to keep seven powerful Dragon Balls out of evil hands.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: When Chi-Chi asked him if he wanted to get married, he thought "married" was some kind of take-out food.



3. MOTOKO KUSANAGI

Ghost in the Shell, Dark Horse Manga

She's an officer of the Security Police Section 9. She has a human brain housed inside a full cyborg body that'd make the Terminator turn green with envy—or at least tarnish a little! Together with a security team of cyborgs and humans, they protect society from terrorists of the information age.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: Once confused olive oil for motor oil, used some, and cleaned out the wrong pipes! Whoosh!



2. OGAMI ITTO

Lone Wolf and Cub, Dark Horse Manga

The shogun's executioner, Ogami Itto was entrusted to bring swift release to those ordered to commit suppuku. Now, framed for the murder of his wife, he's a wandering assassin, stripped of his land and title. With his infant son by his side, he searches for the people who ruined him. He is the Lone Wolf, with Cub.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: He has the same nickname as Lenny from Laverne and Shirley.



1. NAUSICAA

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, Viz

Nausicaa's the 16-year-old Princess of the Valley of the Wind. She's powerful, strong-willed and cute as a button. She's also struggling to keep two warring nations from destroying themselves and their dying planet. Because of her empathy for all living things and as an expert [illegible] Nausicaa's the true hope for the world.

EMBARRASSING SECRET: [illegible]

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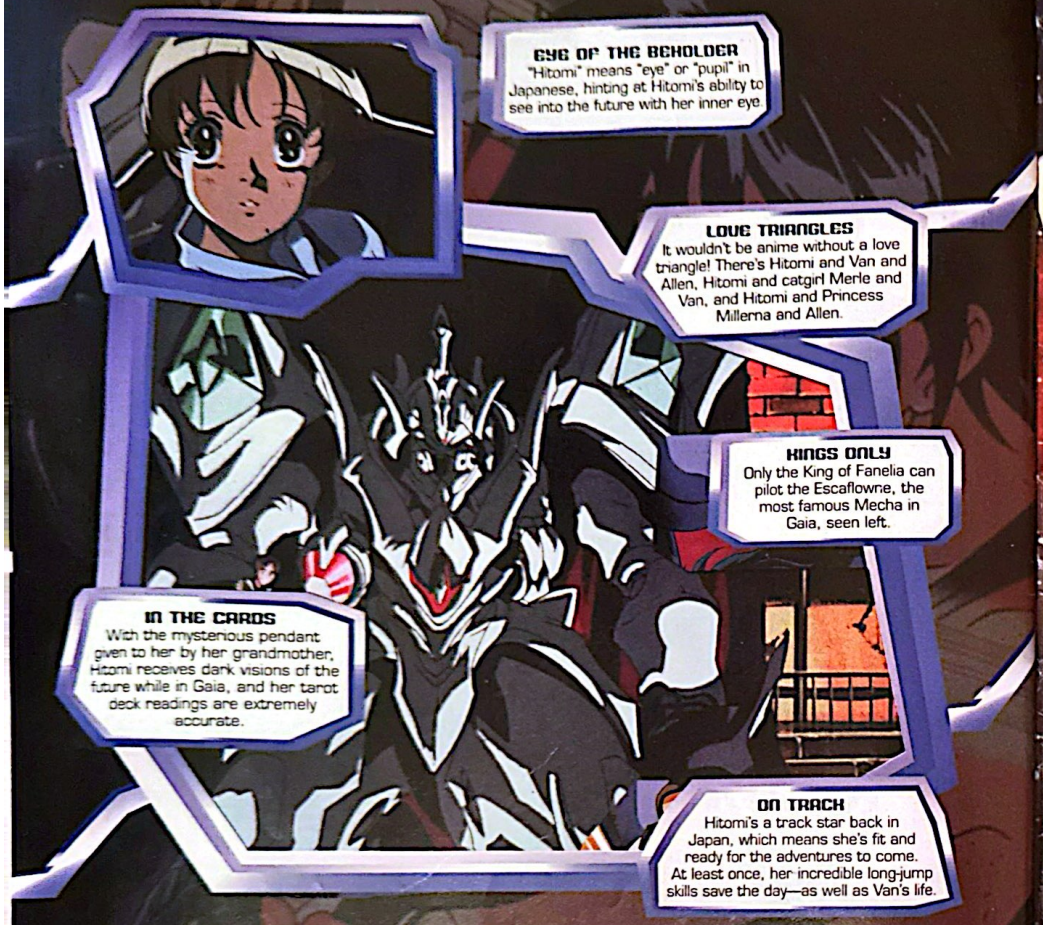
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INVASION PROFILE

ESCAFLOWNE'S HITOMI KANZAKI



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
"Hitomi" means "eye" or "pupil" in Japanese, hinting at Hitomi's ability to see into the future with her inner eye.

LOVE TRIANGLES
It wouldn't be anime without a love triangle! There's Hitomi and Van and Allen, Hitomi and catgirl Merle and Van, and Hitomi and Princess Millerna and Allen.

KINGS ONLY
Only the King of Fanelia can pilot the Escaflowne, the most famous Mecha in Gaia, seen left.

IN THE CARDS
With the mysterious pendant given to her by her grandmother, Hitomi receives dark visions of the future while in Gaia, and her tarot deck readings are extremely accurate.

ON TRACK
Hitomi's a track star back in Japan, which means she's fit and ready for the adventures to come. At least once, her incredible long-jump skills save the day—as well as Van's life.

ORIGIN: Hitomi Kanzaki is a typical Japanese schoolgirl with a gift for reading fortunes with her tarot deck. Her life changes forever when a magic pendant sweeps her to a fantastic world named Gaia, where knights battle in giant steam-powered robots, and fire-breathing dragons haunt the skies—a world where Earth is known as the Mystic Moon. Befriended by the young prince Van Fanel and the dashing knight Allen Schezar, she finds herself drawn into a war between a massive empire and small peripheral kingdoms—a conflict in which her mystical skills may shift the fate of nations.

NOW APPEARING: *Escaflowne* ran on the Fox Kids Network in the United States and YTV in Canada during 2001. If you want to check out all the giant medieval robot action, Bandai Entertainment has collected the series on eight DVDs for $29.98 apiece—or eight VHS tapes for $29.98 subbed and $19.98 dubbed. The high fantasy of the *Escaflowne* TV series went steampunk in the new *Escaflowne: A Girl in Gaia* feature film, released in Japan last summer and now arriving to various North American shores!

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